

Constitution of Heritage Bible Church - River Valley

Preamble

We, the members of Heritage Bible Church - River Valley, under the authority of Jesus Christ and His Word, and in unity with the historic Reformed faith, establish this Constitution to govern our life together in worship and ministry.

Article I — Name

The name of this church shall be Heritage Bible Church - River Valley, located in the Arkansas River Valley.

Article II — Purpose

This church exists to glorify God through:

- 1. Worship in reverence and truth (John 4:24),
- 2. Preaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27)
- 3. Administering the ordinances/sacraments (1 Cor 10:16-17, 11:26; Col 2:12)
- 4. Praying for and with one another (Acts 2:42)
- 5. Making and maturing disciples (Matt 28:18–20)
- 6. Equipping the saints for ministry (Eph 4:11–12)
- 7. Practicing biblical discipline (Matt 18; 1 Cor 5)

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Article III — Statement of Faith

This church affirms both:

- *The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689)**
- *The Westminster Standards as revised in 1973*

We recognize these two confessions as faithful summaries of biblical doctrine. While differences exist (notably on baptism and polity), both confessions are welcomed within the leadership and life of this church. We seek to honor unity in essentials, liberty in non-essentials, and charity in all things.

*revisions made to 1973 Westminster would also apply to Second London Baptist Confession (1689), regarding the pope.

Article IV — Membership

Section 1 — Types and Qualifications of Membership

There are 2 types of membership recognized, being as follows:

1. Covenant Children—being the child of at least one believer who is a communing member of the church (1 Cor 7:14)
2. Communing Members—meeting the following requirements

To be admitted to communing membership, an individual must:

- Profess faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 10:9-10)
- Show evidence of regeneration (Matthew 7:16; 2 Cor 5:17; 1 John 2:3-6)
- Have received Christian baptism (covenant or believer's baptism) (Eph 4:4-5)
- Affirm the church covenant (Eph 4:3)
- Submit to the shepherding of the elders (Heb 13:17)

Section 2 — Admission of Members

Applicants shall be interviewed by the elders and, if approved, publicly welcomed into membership. (Mat 10:32; 18:17)

Section 3 — Responsibilities of Members

Members shall:

- Regularly attend corporate worship (Heb 10:24-25)
- Maintain a godly life and pursue spiritual growth (Gal 5:22; Rom 12:1-2; Phil 1:27)
- Support the church through prayer, service, and giving (2 Cor 9:7; 1 Peter 4:10)
- Uphold the unity and purity of the body (Eph 4:1-3)
- Submit to the oversight of the elders (Heb 13:17)

Section 4 — Discipline for Members

The first step in discipline is training in God's Word—as such, all members are under the loving discipline of the elders of the church for their sanctification and their growth in grace (1 Thess 4:3A; 1 Peter 1:2). Members persisting in unrepentant sin are subject to further discipline, for their good, by the elders of the church according to Matthew 18:15–17, 1 Corinthians 5, and Galatians 6:1.

Section 5 — Voting by Members

Voting to be conducted via communing members, who are heads of household, in obedience to the structure laid out in 1 Cor 11:3.

Article V — Church Government

Section 1 — Christ as Head

Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church. Under Him, the church is led by qualified elders, accountable to His Word. (Eph 5:23; Col 1:18)

Section 2 — Elders

The church shall be governed by a plurality of elders, who, in subjection to Scripture, have authority in matters of doctrine, worship, membership, discipline, and vision. The elders shall shepherd the flock; oversee all ministries, including the ministry of the Word and Sacraments; and guard sound doctrine. (Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:9; Acts 15:6; Heb 13:7)

Section 3 — Qualifications and Duties of Elders

Elders must:

- Meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9
- Subscribe to either the London Baptist 1689 Confession or Westminster Standards (and the above noted exceptions for both).
- Respect members and fellow elders who hold the alternate confession (Rom 14:1-5; John 13:34–35)
- Teach and defend sound doctrine (Titus 1:9; 1 Tim 4:16)
- Shepherd the congregation by word and example (1 Cor 11:1)
- Administer discipline and care.

Note: No elder may require a member to accept one confession over the other on disputed matters (e.g., baptism, polity), nor may a member impose their preference on others. (1 Cor 8:9)

Section 4 — Deacons

Deacons shall be communing members who serve under the elders in order to meet the physical and logistical needs of the church. They must agree to the statement of faith of this church, meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:8–13 and maintain a lifestyle of godly service. (Acts 6:1-6)

When no deacons are actively serving in the church, the responsibility of the deacons will fall to the elders of the church.

Article VI — Ordinances / Sacraments

Section 1 — Baptism

Both covenant baptism and believer's baptism are recognized as valid. Each family, under the Word of God and with elder support, may practice according to conscience and confessional conviction.

Section 2 — The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated regularly, open to all baptized believers who have made a public profession of faith and are walking in repentance. It shall be administered under elder oversight.

Article VII — Church Meetings

Lord's Day Worship shall be held weekly for scripture reading, preaching, prayer, sacraments, confession, blessing, worship and praise.

Congregational Gatherings may be called for the purpose of prayer, fellowship, or updates and discussion.

Article VIII — Amendments

This Constitution may be amended by request of the elders with affirmative consent of two-thirds of the membership body after a 30 day season of prayer, and public notice.

Article IX — Dissolution

If this church must dissolve, all assets shall be transferred to Reformed ministries or churches that uphold either the 1689 or Westminster Confession.

Bylaws of Heritage Bible Church - River Valley

Article I — Membership Procedures

Section 1 — Application

Applicants must:

- 1. Meet privately with two or more elders for an interview.
- 2. Present a written or verbal testimony of their faith and baptism.
- 3. Affirm the church covenant.

Section 2 — Baptism Policy

The church accepts:

- Credobaptism (believer's baptism by immersion, effusion or sprinkling),
- Covenant baptism (baptism of a child of a believing parent in a Trinitarian church).

Section 3 — Removal from Membership

Members may be removed by:

- 1. Transfer to another gospel-preaching church,
- 2. Voluntary resignation (unless under discipline),
- 3. Church discipline for unrepentant sin.

Article II — Elders

Section 1 — Qualifications

Elders must:

- Meet biblical qualifications (1 Tim 3; Titus 1)
- Be male
- Must not be a new convert, having been a member of a gospel preaching church for at least 1 year
- Subscribe to either the 1689 or Westminster Confession
- Demonstrate humility and unity with fellow elders across confessional differences.

Section 2 — Selection

- 1. Nominations may be submitted by any member to the elder body.
- 2. Elders examine candidates.
- 3. Upon unanimous elder approval, the candidate is presented to the congregation for feedback.

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- 4. After a 30-day review period, the body of members shall conduct a vote at the next service and confirm or reject the appointment.
- 5. The new elder is installed with prayer and laying on of hands.

Section 3 — Term

Elders serve indefinite terms.

Section 4 — Removal

An elder may be removed for doctrinal deviation or for disqualifying sin, whether public or private.

Any communing member may register a written statement of offense committed by an officer of the church to the elders for review and investigation.

Removal requires a 2/3 majority vote of the elders (excluding the accused) after prayer and due process.

Reference relevant Books of Church Order, including Presbyterian Church in America and others, regarding process for any Rules of Discipline conducted in the church.

Article III — Deacons

Section 1 — Qualifications

Deacons must meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:8–13 and be faithful in service and doctrine.

Section 2 — Selection, Term and Removal

- See Article II, Sections 2-4 for same process

Section 3 — Duties

Deacons oversee practical and material matters of the church, including:

- Facilities
- Benevolence
- Hospitality
- Administration

Deacons operate under elder supervision, and elders may approve assistants to the deacons for specific responsibilities of the church as needed.

Article IV — Church Finances

Section 1 — Stewardship

The elders shall oversee the financial health of the church, aided by deacons.

Section 2 — Budget

A proposed annual budget shall be reviewed and approved by simple majority of the membership annually.

Section 3 — Financial Integrity

At least one annual financial report shall be made available to the church.

- Financial records shall be reviewed annually prior budget approval.
- Upon request of any communing member, a financial report will be made available—not to exceed 30 days from request.

Article V — Church Meetings

Section 1 — Lord's Day Worship

Worship shall be held Sunday and include:

- Preaching of the Word
- Prayer
- Singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs
- The regular celebration of the Lord's Supper
- Baptism when appropriate
- Confession
- Offering
- Reading of Scripture

Section 2 — Congregational Meetings

Called at the elders' discretion or upon request by at least 10% of members.

Purpose may include:

- reports
- prayer
- updates
- input

Section 3 — Voting

Certain matters may be referred to the congregation for affirmation or advisement, such as:

- Recognizing new elders or deacons
- Adopting major building or mission initiatives
- Amending the Constitution or Bylaws

Article VI — Ordinations and Installations

Elders and deacons are formally ordained through prayer and laying on of hands and following of the ordination process as included in an Appendix.

- Visiting pastors or elders of like-minded churches may assist in ordinations.

Article VII — Confessional Harmony

In a dual-confession church:

- Elders and members are not required to change confessional alignment,
- Both covenant baptism and credobaptism are respected
- No elder may require conformity beyond Scripture on disputed issues.
- Elders shall regularly review practices to ensure peace and integrity.

Article VIII — References for Due Process in the Church

In a process not fully defined by this Constitution, Books of Church Order from similar denominations should be used as wise and helpful counsel to the processes conducted in this church. Unless otherwise specified a relevant Book of Church Order should be consulted for any process carried out. In cases of differing processes, a simple majority vote of the elders shall determine the process to be followed.

Church Covenant of Heritage Bible Church - River Valley

Having been brought by the sovereign grace of God to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and having been baptized in obedience to His command—whether under the covenant promises or upon personal profession of faith—we now solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant together as one body in Christ.

1. We Commit to God and One Another

- To glorify God in all things, whether in worship, work, or witness (1 Cor 10:31),
- To live under the authority of God's Word as our only rule of faith and life (2 Tim 3:16–17),
- To walk together in brotherly love as becomes the members of a Christian church (John 13:34–35),
- To submit to the loving shepherding of the elders whom God has placed over us (Heb 13:17).

2. We Commit to Worship and Doctrine

- To gather faithfully and consistently for the public worship of God, not forsaking the Sabbath. (Heb 10:24–25),
- To uphold the preaching of the gospel, the right administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the practice of church discipline (Acts 2:42; Matt 28:19–20; 1 Cor 11:23–26),
- To receive and practice baptism in good conscience before God, whether administered as a sign of God's covenant promises, or in professed faith following regeneration (Rom 4:11; Col 2:12),
- To faithfully partake of the Lord's Supper as a regular means of grace, signifying our unity in Christ, for spiritual nourishment, and in remembrance of His atoning work (1 Cor. 10:16–17).

3. We Commit to Holiness and Growth

- To pursue lives worthy of the gospel through holiness, prayer, and the study of Scripture (Eph 4:1; 1 Pet 1:15),
- To train our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord (Deut 6:6–7; Eph 6:4),
- To resist sin, repent regularly, and exhort one another toward spiritual maturity (Gal 6:1; Heb 3:12–13).

4. We Commit to Service and Unity

- To use our spiritual gifts and resources for the building up of the body and the furtherance of the Kingdom (1 Cor 12:7; 1 Pet 4:10),
- To seek the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, showing charity where we differ on secondary matters (Eph 4:2–6),
- To bear with one another in love, forgive as we have been forgiven, and pursue reconciliation when offended (Col 3:13; Matt 18:15–17).

5. We Commit to Mission and Witness

- To support the proclamation of the gospel to our neighbors and the nations (Matt 28:18–20, 1 Peter 3:15)
- To support the ministry of the church through prayer, financial giving, and active participation (2 Cor 9:7; Rom 12:11),
- To live as salt and light in the world, adorning the gospel with our conduct (Matt 5:13–16; Titus 2:10).

6. We Commit to Perseverance

- We will, when we move from this church, unite with another faithful church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.
- By God's grace and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we joyfully and solemnly commit ourselves to this covenant, praying that He who began a good work in us will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:6).

Signed on this day, _____, by _____.

Appendix 1

ORDINATION PROCESS

QUESTIONS TO THE OFFICER

1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures? Do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any of the fundamentals of this system of doctrine, you will on your own initiative, make known to your fellow elders the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow, and will you submit to the scriptures and shepherding of your elders in resolution of any changes of views that may occur?
3. Do you approve of the form of government and discipline of Heritage Bible Church, in conformity with the general principles of Biblical polity?
4. Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?
5. Do you accept the office of elder (or deacon, as the case may be) in this church, and promise faithfully to perform all the duties thereof, and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your life, and to set a worthy example before the Church of which God has made you an officer?
6. Do you promise to strive for the purity, peace, unity and edification of the Church?

QUESTIONS TO THE CHURCH

Do you, the members of Heritage Bible Church, acknowledge and receive this brother as an elder (or deacon), and do you promise to yield to him all that honor, encouragement and obedience in the Lord to which his office, according to the Word of God and the Constitution of this Church, entitles him.

Laying on of hands in Prayer

PRONOUNCEMENT

I now pronounce and declare that _____ has been regularly elected, ordained and installed an elder (or deacon) in this church, agreeable to the Word of God, and according to the Constitution of Heritage Bible Church, and that as such he is entitled to all encouragement, honor and obedience in the Lord: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

CHARGE TO THE OFFICER

A biblical charge shall be given to the newly ordained officer in front of the congregation, reminding him of the responsibility, commitment and difficulties in which he has elected to participate in his office, calling him to long-suffering for the sake of Christ and His Church. Due encouragements and warnings should be included in the charge so that the officer is reminded to serve in the fear of the Lord and in the encouragement of the power of the Spirit at work.