



# **Constitution**

Updated April 25, 2018

## **Preamble**

Since it pleased Almighty God, by His Holy Spirit, to establish a church here in 1890 under the name Catherine Lake Missionary Baptist Church for the worship of God and the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and He alone has sustained and prospered this work to the present day; and whereas we, the members of Catherine Lake Baptist Church, having studied the Scriptures under the guidance of His Spirit, have recognized the need to reconstitute ourselves to more closely conform to the Scriptures, to understand and articulate our beliefs, and to prepare ourselves for greater efforts for the Glory of God; therefore we now, the members of Catherine Lake Baptist Church, do hereby adopt this Constitution as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to display the character of God, as revealed in the Holy Bible, so as to commend the Gospel and glorify His Name. This Constitution is a guide to aid this local church in her cause, to promote order and worship, to guard her from false teaching and practice, and to fulfill the requirements of the non-profit laws of North Carolina. This Constitution is never to be held up above the Authority of Scripture, as a god of any sort, but shall be a document subject to change, in accordance with this church's biblical beliefs. This local church may do without a Constitution, but may never do without Jesus.

## **Article 1 – Name**

The name of this local church is Catherine Lake Baptist Church.

## **Article 2 – Members' Belief & Practice**

In covenant with one another, we believe the Word of God is the only authority for faith and practice. We affirm the 1689 Baptist Confession as the most “excellent, though not inspired, expression of the teaching of the Holy Scriptures by which all confessions are to be measured. We hold to the humbling truths of God's sovereign grace in the salvation of lost sinners. Salvation is through Christ alone and by faith alone” (Spurgeon). Principally, Philippians 2:1–11 is our governing verse.

In cooperation with Southern Baptists, we affirm the Baptist Faith & Message 2000.

## **Article 3 – Members' Purpose & Covenant**

Building upon the Word of God as the only authority for faith and practice, we testify that God's Sovereignty and Grace has placed us in this body for the purpose of Christian communion, discipleship, and the spread of His Glorious Kingdom. Therefore, as covenant members we promise to:

LOVE the Lord Jesus Christ supremely, and to love one another, and to  
Exercise MERCY to the suffering and poor, and to ensure  
TRUTHful teaching takes place in our church, making it a healthy place for God's  
children, and to  
Pursue HOLINESS in our hearts, minds, and actions both inside and outside the  
church, and to remain  
Alive in our WITNESS to the world remembering that we came to know Him because  
someone shared the Gospel with us, and  
IN ALL these THINGS, and in all of life, and in all we attempt to do in this church for  
God's Glory, may we  
Never let go of a GOD-CENTERED GOSPEL, and  
TRUST the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

## **Article 4 – Government**

Under the authority of Jesus Christ, His Word, and His Spirit, this local church shall be governed by its members, in submission to Him, in the manner set forth in this Constitution, for the glory of God the Father. This Constitution is the By-Laws of Catherine Lake Baptist Church for the purposes of North Carolina General Statutes Chapter 55A.

## **Article 5 – Membership**

Joining a local church is making a promise to God and to God's people to serve Him in the context He has ordained to bless the world. This joining should never be viewed as similar to joining a club or other earthly organization. Rather, joining and remaining in a local church is in essence an authentication of one's calling as part of the body of Christ (1John 2:19), in the household of God (1Tim. 3:15). We value our being involved with the formal membership of the Church universal throughout the world, as we believe it is His plan, not ours, and therefore it is our glad obligation to submit to His architecture of grace.

---

### **Section 1 - Qualifications**

The qualifications to join this local church are limited to those who give evidence of regeneration (John 3:3-8; Acts 2:47; Walking in the Light, 1John 1:5-7; Confession of Sin, 1John 1:8-10; Obedience to God 1John 2:3-4; Love for other Christians, 1John 2:9-11; Hatred for the depraved ways of the World, 1John 1:15-17; Perseverance in Doctrine, 1John 2:24-25; Righteousness, 1John 3:10; Giving evidence of the Spirit, 1John 4:13; Discipline, Heb. 12:5-8), and willingly submit to this local church's leadership, discipline, policies, and beliefs (Amos 3:3; 1Cor. 1:10; 1Tim. 6:3-4; Heb. 13:17; 1Peter 5:5; 1John 1:3). Persons desiring to join this local church should be regularly attending Care Group Meetings (i.e. Sunday School) and Worship Services. And they should be baptized as believers (exceptions to believer's baptism must be approved by the Elders).

---

### **Section 2 - Recognizing Members**

Upon recommendation of the Elders and the majority affirmation of this local church, the persons applying for membership will be received as members and added to the church roll. New members shall be received and recognized by this church at any Members' Meeting or Worship Service. The children of members shall be considered a valid part of the church (Mark 10:14-15) until they are out from under their parent's authority and their own regeneration becomes naturally evident to the church, at which time, they themselves may officially join the church.

---

### **Section 3 - Termination of Membership**

A person shall be removed from membership in the event of their death, a request by said member in good standing, or as a last effort to restore a member through church discipline. There shall be a six month maximum to stay on roll after moving or missing from Lord's Day services without an excuse which has been approved by church leadership.

---

## Section 4 - Church Discipline

When it comes to church discipline, members should be mindful of their equally humble position before God (Matt. 18:1-6; 1Peter 5:3; Mark 10:42-45) and their responsibility before other church members to live godly (Matt. 18:6; Rom. 14:21), and to regularly assemble with the local church (Heb. 10:23-27). As disciples of Jesus Christ, each member should practice rigorous self-discipline to overcome personal sin (Matt. 18:7-9; 5:23-24). The Elders of the church should particularly seek to restore any stray members (Matt. 18:10-14; Ezek. 34:3-6); this may be referred to as Shepherd's care discipline. All members should seek to restore each other through mutual discipline, in a way that minimizes publicity of sins (Matt. 18:15-17). In the event that these aforementioned methods of church discipline are ineffective, the impenitent member should be admonished by the assembled congregation, in the presence of Christ's Spirit (Matt. 18:17 a, 20; 1Cor. 5:3-4); and this may be referred to as corporate discipline. This corporate discipline should be exercised whenever possible in a Care Group Meeting (see Article 7, Section 2), under the direction of a qualified church leader, in accordance with Matthew 18:20.

If the member remains unmoved by the admonition of the church, that member may be removed from membership, with recommendation of the Elders, by the affirmation of 75% of members present (Matt. 18:17 b; 1Cor.5:1-5; 1Thess. 5:13; Titus 3:10) at a Members' Meeting. The said member may be restored in the same manner of affirmation (2Cor. 2:5-11).

In the event that an Elder or other member has acted in a way that has compromised the integrity of the church in these aforementioned matters of discipline, they will be subject to the discipline of the church themselves (Deut. 19:15; James 2:12-13). Yet, an Elder, including the Pastor, shall not be disciplined by the church body, except with substantiated charges in accordance with 1Tim. 5:19-20.

Any Elder, acting or not, staff or non-staff, shall be disciplined when there are substantiated charges which have proven the said Elder has betrayed the trust, which the church has placed in them as a leader. With hope of restoration, this disciplining should be done first among the Elders. If the Elder persists in sin, or if the sin is of a disqualifying nature, the matter should be made known to the congregation with solemnity, in accordance with 1Tim. 5:19-21. In such disciplinary cases, the said Elder may be dismissed from his position and membership, with recommendation of the Elders, by the affirmation of 75% of members present (Matt. 18:17 b; 1Cor.5:1-5; 1Thess. 5:13; Titus 3:10) at a Members' Meeting. The said Elder may be restored in the same manner of affirmation (2Cor. 2:5-11).

All church discipline shall be done to protect God's Church (1Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9) and to display the Glory of God (1Cor. 10:31-33) employing: the relational aspects elaborated in our Vision Statement (Article 3, section 2), due respect (1Tim. 5:1-2, 19-20), prudence (see The Book of Proverbs), prayer (Heb. 13:18), and a Gospel-saturated knowledge of the Scriptures (2Tim. 3:16; Luke 24:44-47), as is fitting among those known as God's People, the Church.

## Article 6 – Meetings

---

### Section 1 - Worship Services

The church is scheduled to meet regularly each Lord's Day (Sundays) for a worship service at a time agreed upon by the congregation. The worship service shall exalt the preaching of God's Word with prayer as the foundational means by which our purpose should be fulfilled. This

service shall include an extended session for missions items, for people to ask questions of the pastor related to what has been preached, and to request prayer.

Further outreach efforts may be added as agreed upon by the congregation. Even so, this aforementioned preaching service should remain the center from which all other initiatives remain supportive, and the primary venue from which the church sets forth its first impression.

---

## Section 2 - Members' Meetings

Members shall meet the first Wednesday after the first Sunday of each quarter, unless otherwise determined by the church to: renew their Members' Covenant, pray for the church and missions, receive and recognize new members, practice church discipline, vote on matters requiring a church approval, and receive ministry and finance reports. The Fall (annual) meeting may be held prior to Sept. 30, in order to adopt a budget for the coming year. Special meetings may be called at any time provided the Elders give the congregation notice of the meeting on the Sunday prior to the meeting, so all may have opportunity to attend. As for a minimum amount of members required for a meeting to exist, we desire 60% of our members to be present to constitute a quorum; but all members should be present for all Members' Meetings. As for voting, (anywhere in this document where a majority is mentioned), the majority shall be defined as no less than 75%. Members' meetings shall be operated with a deep consideration of our Lord's example in Philippians 2:1-11, and a call to practice that example set forth by our Lord. Meetings shall be led by the Pastor, or another Elder in his absence, as has been agreed upon by the Elders. Members' Meetings shall be devotional in nature, not outside of the worship of our wise and governing God (Romans 11:36, 16:27; 1Tim. 1:17, 3:15), and therefore Members' Meetings should generally include the aforementioned elements, be initiated with song, and closed with prayer.

---

## Section 3 - Leadership Meetings

Elders shall meet as deemed necessary by the Elders and the church.

## Article 7 – Offices of the Church

The church has two offices, Elders (overseers) and Deacons (ministry assistants). Other positions in the church include: clerk, treasurer, and assistant treasurer, which may be filled by persons holding one of these aforementioned offices, or by members with the similar Christian character. All members, though not holding a particular office, are encouraged to use their talents, time, and treasures to meet the various needs of the church body.

---

## Section 1 - Elders

Elders are to be men, and only men, who possess the Christian character described in 1Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The Elders exist to care for, train and instruct, and to lead the church (Acts 20:28; Titus 1:9; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

The spiritual task of appointing Elders in the church is as follows: The church body should speak with the Pastor about a candidate only after they have seen the person's Christian conduct over an extended period of time (1Tim. 5:22). The candidate should be commendable in his character, and able to train others in the Faith. The Pastor shall then make Elder recommendations to the congregation (generally in the Spring, but at anytime) and these Elder candidates shall be established with a majority affirmation of the church. We proceed in this manner based on the example that Paul appointed Elders in every church, and charged Titus (a

Pastor) to set what remained into order, which was to appoint Elders in the same manner. Yet, we understand that the members of that time must have been able to affirm the Elders' character and calling; and the Holy Spirit was in charge of all of this (Acts 20:28) as He should be in all the churches, for the honor of God the Son to the glory of God the Father.

For corporation purposes, Elders shall be the directors and trustees of the corporation; the Elders shall choose a president and vice president among themselves to represent the church in matters of the corporation. They shall also choose an Elder or Deacon to record the minutes of their meetings. The Elders shall be limited by the following: The Elders shall involve the church in any expenditure found to be outside of the budget limit, and for the purchase of real property. The Elders shall not amend these bylaws, adopt budgets, elect those to office of Elder or Deacon, or hire Pastoral staff without the majority support of the church.

Elders shall be reaffirmed annually, excluding the Pastor. When the church is of able size, a rotation may be established to provide times of rest for those serving as Elders. Unless otherwise noted, throughout this document, the term 'Elders' shall be interpreted as "acting Elders".

Concerning the Pastor, he shall be a man who is also an Elder, just as Peter was an Elder instructing Elders in 1Peter 5:1. The Pastor exists to lead and direct the Elders and the church in their ministry and maturity (i.e. becoming more like Jesus) through the Word and Prayer (Eph. 4:11-12; Col. 1:28-29; 1 Tim. 2:1, 4:6; 2Tim. 4:1-2; Titus 1:9; 1 Peter 5:1). Therefore, the candidate should have some formal training in biblical studies. Furthermore, the candidate should have a credible salvation testimony and be willing to submit to the leadership, discipline, policies, and beliefs of this church. The candidate shall be qualified by the same character and gifting as other Elders, except this Elder shall be one who is particularly recognized by the church as called to be the Pastor. The church shall have opportunity to hear the candidate preach and to meet well with him before a Pastor is appointed. And the majority, if not all of the church, as with Elders, should agree this man is being appointed by the Holy Spirit, as the leader of their church. And upon his installation as Pastor, he shall also be a member of this church. In the case of a vacancy, the Elders shall serve to search for a Pastor (as with other staff), with the approval of the congregation. Other members may assist in this search, with the approval of the congregation.

---

## Section 2 - Deacons

Deacons shall be men who are qualified by the biblical characteristics listed in 1Timothy 3:8-13. The Deacons exist to assist the Elders in the ministry as was displayed in Acts 6:1-7. We do not know for certain if women who were called Deacons (servants like Phoebe in the Church) bore an actual title of Deaconess; what we do see clearly is men and women in the Bible who are of proven worth, entrusted to carry out certain duties which were helpful to the Apostles. So, although we do not have the office of Deaconess officially, we do recognize and expect women of proven character to also be working alongside of the men in a complimentary way. We see such a role being fulfilled primarily by Elders' and Deacons' wives, but not limited to such.

Whenever Elders become overburdened by the ministry to the extent that they are unable to give the majority of their time to studying the Bible and Prayer, a Deacon position or positions should be established to assist the Elders; these may include finance, church property, help with visitation, mercy ministries, and other ministries, but they are not limited to such. The church should make efforts to prevent overburdening Elders by establishing Deacon positions, as far as they have qualified men to do so.

Generally speaking, Deacons should be selected when a long-term need has arisen in the church that the Elders require assistance in meeting. If the Elders agree this need would be best met by establishing Deacon positions, then at that time, the Elders shall ask the church, if the persons have not already been recommended, to recommend qualified persons to fill these roles; and these persons shall be established as Deacons by the majority affirmation of the church. Deacons shall be reaffirmed annually. When the church is of able size, a rotation may be established to provide times of rest for those serving as Deacons. Deacon positions may be changed or eliminated based on the needs of the church, at the request of the Elders, and with the majority approval of the church.

---

### **Section 3 - Clerk & Assistant Clerk**

A Clerk and Assistant Clerk shall be appointed by the majority approval of the congregation. A Clerk shall serve as the Secretary of the corporation to record the minutes of Members' Meetings. An Assistant Clerk shall assist the Clerk by maintaining a Church Directory for the Members, publishing it at least quarterly (if any changes exist) after each Members' Meeting, and assume the duties of the Clerk in the event of the Clerk's absence.

---

### **Section 4 - Treasurer & Assistant Treasurer**

A church Treasurer and an Assistant church Treasurer shall be appointed by the majority approval of the congregation. The Treasurer shall see that all expenses are paid, needed records are kept, and financial integrity is upheld. An Assistant Treasurer shall assist the Treasurer in his duties to promote proper internal controls and to provide a back-up in the event that the Treasurer is unable to perform his duties.

## **Article 8 – Amendments & Changes**

This Constitution may be amended or changed by 75% of those members present and voting in a Members' Meeting, provided the proposed amendment has been approved by the Elders, or has been submitted by a petition signed by not less than 20% of the voting members, and provided the proposed amendment has been conspicuously posted in written form for two consecutive Sundays before the meeting will take place. Any changes adapted to this document, that necessarily effect our Articles of Incorporation, should be made at that same time by the directors of the corporation. And all changes to this Constitution should be made in effort to conform more closely to the Scriptures, to better articulate our beliefs, and to mobilize the Church for greater efforts for the Glory of God.