

# BEREA BAPTIST CHURCH

## Constitution and Bylaws



# Berea Baptist Church

## Preamble to the Constitution & Bylaws

### Why We Exist

Berea Baptist Church is a body of believers organized into a New Testament Church to carry out both the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. In meeting these objectives, special emphasis will be placed upon worship, discipleship, and relationship. (Matt 28:18-20; Matt 22:36-40; Acts 2:42).

1. We commit to worship the Lord in corporate assembly, with our families, and in our private lives.
2. Discipleship includes both the evangelization of the lost and the equipping of the saints.
3. The building and strengthening of relationships encompasses relationships with unbelievers designed to bring them into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and relationships with other believers for mutual encouragement and admonition.

In line with these objectives, we assemble together for spiritual edification, Biblical exhortation, and personal encouragement. Though the gospel will often be presented during a service, the purpose of the service is not to target unbelievers for evangelism. Evangelism is to take place when we leave the assembly. Every believer is responsible to share the gospel message through their lives and through their lips with people they come into contact with. In other words, the church gathers for edification and scatters for evangelism.

### Who We Are

In September of 1995 a group of believers began meeting together. They were firmly convinced that the Dahlonega area was in need of a Church that was thoroughly committed to the

belief that the Bible is the infallible Word of God and that its teachings should be the basis of a local church ministry. On November 19, 1995, Berea Baptist Church of Lumpkin County was organized. The name Berea was chosen because of the statement in Acts 17:11 that the people of Berea were eager to hear and diligent in their study of the Word of God. "Berea" was the name of a city in ancient Macedonia located at the foot of Mount Bermius.

We have outlined some focal points of our ministry with the following acrostic:

**B** - Building Lives on the Word of God

**E** - Evangelizing our Community

**R** - Relationship Building for Encouragement and Support

**E** - Equipping the Saints for Ministry

**A** - Assimilating New Members into our Church Family

Therefore we adopt this Constitution, thus establishing statutes for the orderly conduct of the functions of congregational business and activity (1 Corinthians 14:40).

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## **Article One: The Church Name**

At the time of our organization as a church, we selected the name Berea Baptist Church of Lumpkin County.

## **Article Two: Organization**

1. Berea Baptist Church was founded on November 19, 1995 as a non-profit organization for religious purposes. The Church was incorporated as Berea Baptist Church of Lumpkin County under the laws of Georgia on March 3, 2004.
2. Berea Baptist Church is an Elder led church. This was the consistent New Testament pattern of leadership in the early church (see our publication, What The Bible Teaches About Church Leadership). There was always a plurality of Elders; more than one. They were the highest authority within a local church, yet they are not to "lord over" God's heritage (1Pet 5:3). While there is no clear Biblical pattern or example for a "church vote", it is clear that the church body was involved to some degree in the decision making process (Acts 6:3-6; 15:12, 22-23).
3. There shall be a "family meeting" approximately once a quarter, or as needed. All members and regular attendees of the church may attend this meeting. At this meeting our financial position, ministry needs, and other family issues shall be presented. In the event that the church is unable to reach a general consensus on a matter the Elders may call for a vote.
4. For all church votes, only active members eighteen years of age or older are eligible to vote. Any members under church discipline are not eligible to vote. Non-members may be allowed to remain during such vote at the discretion of the Elders. There is no provision for proxy or absentee voting.
5. Berea Baptist Church is a sovereign and autonomous church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and is

accountable to no outside authority in spiritual matters pertaining to faith and practice.

## **Article Three: Purposes of Berea Baptist Church**

1. To provide the opportunity for worship, fellowship, instruction, service and prayer (Acts 2:42).
2. To provide the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 2:42).
3. To proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ at home and abroad (Acts 1:8).

## **Article Four: Doctrinal Statement**

1. The Bible is the inspired Word of God, given for our encouragement, admonition, and instruction. It is infallible and the only absolute rule of faith and practice.
2. There is one God who has revealed himself in three separate persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. Through the virgin birth, Jesus Christ became flesh and by His death, burial and resurrection He has provided the way for all men to be saved through personal faith in Him.
4. Man was created in innocence. When Adam fell, he brought sin and death upon all humanity. All men are sinners and deserve to spend eternity in the Lake of Fire.
5. Man is saved by faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ. The basis for salvation is faith in the finished work of Christ upon Calvary. The saved are eternally secure in Christ.
6. The church is the means through which God has determined to make known His glory and salvation to all mankind.

## **Article Five: Church Government**

1. Spiritual Leadership – The spiritual leadership for Berea Baptist Church is relegated to the body of Elders (Acts 20:28-30). The church acknowledges the Lord Jesus Christ as its Head; the Holy Spirit as its Source of power, and the Holy Scriptures as the infallible guide in all matters of faith, church order, and discipline.
2. Affiliation - Berea Baptist Church is not affiliated with any ecclesiastical or denominational governing body but is part of the invisible Church composed of all believers in Jesus Christ throughout the world. This lack of formal affiliation shall not prevent us from participating with other churches or organizations in combined ministry as the Elders deem appropriate.
3. Authority - The governmental authority of Berea Baptist church is invested in the body of Elders. They are charged with the task of governing the church according to the Holy Scriptures. They shall lead the church in all matters including but not limited to: annual budget, calling of a pastor, ordination of church officers, and amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws.

## **Article Six: Church Membership**

- I. Qualifications - The membership of the church shall consist of individuals who have confessed the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, accepted the doctrinal statement contained herein in its entirety, attended a membership orientation class, understood and accepted the commitments and obligations of church membership as indicated by their request for membership. The Elders shall discuss all potential members and be in agreement before membership is granted.
- II. Membership Orientation - All prospective members of this church shall attend a membership orientation class. They will be asked to give a statement regarding their personal faith in Jesus Christ and indicate a willingness to live in

accordance with the teaching of God's Holy Word and in communion with other members of the church.

- III. Reception of Members - New church members shall be presented to the church body at a regular worship service and shall publicly express their desire to be received into this fellowship. At such time they shall affirm their continuing acceptance of our doctrinal statement and state their commitment to be faithful to the Lord and this church. In response, the church shall give affirmation receiving them into the fellowship.
- IV. Water Baptism by Immersion - Baptism by immersion was the consistent pattern in the New Testament. This is a voluntary identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a first step of obedience that marked the converts and identified them with the New Testament church.
- V. Membership Roll - The Elders will communicate with any member who has been regularly absent from the services of this church for an extended period of time in an attempt to restore the member to active participation. If the member fails to respond satisfactorily the church body shall be advised and encouraged to pray and work for their restoration to the body. The Elders shall make a diligent effort to restore them for at least six months. If there is no response on the part of the inactive member during this time he shall be dropped from the church roll.
- VI. Church Discipline
  - A. Any member who manifests willful, sinful behavior which is a clear violation of Scripture and which could damage the church or any of its members, weaken its testimony, or promote disunity shall be subject to discipline as set forth in Matthew 18:15-22 and 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. The Elders shall have oversight of the disciplinary process and shall seek restoration of the offending member. In the event such restoration fails, the offending member shall be excluded from membership as consistent with the teachings of the Word of God.

- B. When offended, individual members of the body are responsible to be obedient to the Scriptures and to personally confront the offender. If the behavior continues, the offender should be confronted by two or three members, which may include an Elder. If the behavior still continues, the Elders shall be advised by the offended party and shall investigate the offense by interviewing the offender. When the Elders are in accord that further discipline is necessary, the congregation shall be advised of the offense. Such disclosure will be made at a regular congregational or special called meeting. If the behavior is not corrected, the offending member shall be excluded from membership.
  - C. The members of Berea Baptist Church declare that in joining the church they have entered into a covenant to minister to one another's spiritual needs. This relationship is entered into by mutual consent between the individual and the church body. Church discipline is intended for the upbuilding of the body by encouraging the repentance and restoration of the offender and by acting as a deterrent to the other members of the body. Therefore, members whose behavior is subject to discipline provided above may not avoid disciplinary action by unilaterally withdrawing their membership from the church. Anyone is free to withdraw from membership at any time, but such a withdrawal shall not prevent the matter from being presented to the church at the discretion of the Elders.
  - D. Further, in accordance with 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, the members of Berea Baptist Church hereby covenant and agree that they will not pursue legal action or sue the church or its members who administer disciplinary action in accordance with the teachings of Scripture and as stated in this Constitution.
- VII. Denial of Membership - The Elders reserve the right to deny membership to any applicant who they are convinced holds to doctrinal positions that are

incompatible with our statement of faith. Further, any applicant with serious matters of unresolved sin may also be denied membership. No person shall be denied membership on any other basis. (also see Article Six, Paragraph VI, A)

### **Article Seven: Church Officers**

The Elders, church staff, trustees, deacons, and lay leaders are responsible to live lives that are Christ-like in nature. They are expected to uphold and promote the doctrinal positions of the church and to work harmoniously with the congregation within the provisions of this Constitution and By-Laws, in our formal position statements, and in the Policy and Procedure Guidelines. Together, they are to provide spiritual leadership in all areas of the ministry of this church.

- I. Elders - The Elders shall be comprised of men called by the Holy Spirit, recognized by the church and appointed by the existing Elders. General qualifications of Elders are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-8. The responsibility of an Elder is to Christ, each other, and the congregation. The Senior Pastor shall immediately become a de facto member of the body of Elders by virtue of his acceptance of a call to this church.
  - A. Specific qualifications for Elders
    - 1. All Elders must have been a member of Berea Baptist Church for at least twelve months (except the Senior Pastor) and have a pattern of good attendance during that time. They are expected to make a diligent effort to be present at every regular and special service of the church and all meetings of the body of Elders.
    - 2. He must acknowledge and be in agreement with the Doctrinal Statement of the church and the position statements approved by the Elders. Any time that his views change and become contrary to these, he shall notify the body of Elders immediately.

3. They shall seek to be sensitive to both the leading of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual growth and development of those in the church family. They shall be alert to men who may be potential Elders.

#### B. Appointment of an Elder

1. Potential Elders shall be presented to the congregation after expressing both a willingness to serve in such capacity and a sense of the Spirit's calling. The purpose of this presentation is to allow the church family to have an opportunity to address any areas of concern regarding a man's qualifications and ability to serve as an Elder.
2. After a person has been presented to the church as a prospective Elder, he shall either be approved and ordained within two (2) months, or the church shall be advised that after further prayer and consideration the individual and the Elders do not have peace about proceeding with ordination at this time.
3. New Elders shall be ordained and installed at a special service of the church and shall serve indefinitely.

#### C. Responsibilities - Elders have the responsibility...

1. To oversee the spiritual life of the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2; Hebrews 13:17).
2. To oversee the temporal areas of the ministry (1 Timothy 3:4-5, 5:17).
3. To guard sound doctrine (Titus 2:1-7).
4. To assume the duties of the Pulpit Committee when the pastorate is vacant as detailed in the Policy and Procedure Guidelines.
5. To establish and maintain spiritual relationships with church members and potential church members.
6. To visit regularly the membership of the church, particularly the sick and distressed and to visit

prospective members to encourage them regarding membership.

7. To proclaim the gospel and lead church members to witness and spread the gospel to the community.
8. To be responsible for the oversight of church discipline according to 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13.
9. To approve any ministry outside the church considered an arm of the church such as home Bible classes, etc.
10. To establish and review church policies and procedures.

#### D. Procedures

1. The Elders may organize themselves as they consider appropriate for ministering to the church. One Elder shall serve as a clerk and shall record, print, and file the minutes of their meetings. These minutes are confidential and shall be kept in a secure manner.
2. Under no conditions shall a group of Elders meet for the purpose of discussing church business without all Elders being advised.
3. Any Elder who wishes to become inactive for reasons of health, age, or otherwise may present such a request to the remaining Elders. He shall retain his title and position of honor and respect in the church but shall not be expected to attend meetings or share in carrying the burdens of the ministry. He may return to active status at his own request.

#### E. Removal for Cause

1. Elders that are involved in serious matters of sin are to be publicly rebuked according to the Scripture (1Tim 5:19-21). In the event of such a matter, the Elders shall meet with the accused Elder to validate whether such charges are true and

to allow the accused an opportunity to present his position. If the remaining Elders are convinced that public discipline is appropriate, a special church meeting shall be called to address the matter. In no case shall charges that have not been documented by two or more witnesses be brought before the church. In no case shall a meeting of the Elders be convened outside of the presence of the accused. This provision shall not preclude another Elder or two from taking part in the discovery process. In the event charges are made against an Elder they must be either demonstrated to be false to the satisfaction of the accusers or the matter must come before the entire body of Elders.

2. Removal of an Elder for cause shall only be for matters of a most serious nature. An Elder may be removed from his position only by a unanimous vote of the other Elders (the accused not voting) and a two-thirds majority vote of 50 percent of the eligible voting church members.
3. No church vote shall take place without the accused having an opportunity to present his case to the church body. No vote shall take place if an Elder has already resigned. However, such a resignation shall not prevent the matters from being disclosed to the congregation.

II. Pastors - The Pastors shall consist of a Senior Pastor and other Pastors as are deemed necessary. General qualifications for all Pastors are found in Titus 1:6-8 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

A. Specific qualifications for Pastors

1. All Pastors must acknowledge and be in agreement with the Doctrinal Statement of the church and the position statements approved by the Elders. Any time that his views change and become contrary to these, he shall notify the body of Elders immediately.

2. The Pastors must have training and experience which qualifies them for a ministry in the local congregation.

B. Appointment

1. A Senior Pastor shall be called by a 2/3 majority vote of at least 50% of the eligible voting church members after having been recommended by unanimous vote of the Elders. A church vote to call a senior pastor shall be announced on a Sunday morning from the pulpit and in the church bulletin for at least two weeks in advance. Such a vote shall take place on a Sunday morning.
2. By virtue of the call and acceptance, the Senior Pastor automatically becomes a member of the church and an Elder. The Senior Pastor shall at all times be considered the "first among equals" among the Elders.

C. Responsibilities of the Senior Pastor

1. He shall assume all the duties and responsibilities specified for Elders.
2. He shall prepare and organize the church services. The Pastor has the responsibility for articulating and shepherding the vision and mission of the Church and organizing and administering the execution of that vision and mission.
3. It shall be his duty to conduct the worship services of the church, administer the ordinances of a New Testament church, and preside at congregational meetings.
4. He has oversight of the day-to-day business of the church office, facilities and personnel.
5. He shall preside and serve as moderator in all church business meetings. In the event of his absence, he may appoint one of the other elders to serve as Moderator pro tem.

6. He shall work to administer the approved church budget and to insure that expenditures are consistent with cash flow availability.
7. It is recognized that the primary area of responsibility for the Senior Pastor is the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.
8. He is to work closely with the other Elders under the principle of mutual accountability.
9. When he expects to be absent from the pulpit, he shall notify the Elders, and, if necessary, they shall assist him in securing a suitable pulpit supply. In the event of his absence by reason of serious illness or other emergency, or in the event of a vacancy in the office of Senior Pastor, the Elders shall secure a pulpit supply.

#### D. Pastoral Staff

1. Pastoral staff shall be called and employed as the Elders determine the need for such positions. Such call and employment shall be made by the Elders after the individual has been presented to the church.
2. A job description shall be written when the need for a staff member is determined.
3. The accountability of the pastoral staff is to the Senior Pastor and the Elders for performance, doctrinal teachings, morals, and ethics.
4. Pastoral Staff, other than Senior Pastor, may be removed from their position by a unanimous vote of the Elders.

#### E. Removal of a Senior Pastor for Cause (See Art VII, 1, E)

1. By unanimous vote of the Elders, the Pastor not voting, a recommendation to remove the Senior Pastor for cause shall be presented to the congregation. A vote to remove a Senior Pastor for cause shall be announced on a Sunday morning

from the pulpit and in the church bulletin for at least two weeks in advance of such vote. Such a vote shall take place on a Sunday morning and shall require a two-thirds majority vote of 50 percent of the eligible voting church members to dismiss a Senior Pastor. One of the other Elders shall serve as the moderator of the meeting in which such a vote takes place.

2. No church vote shall take place without the accused having an opportunity to present his case to the church body. No vote shall take place if the Senior Pastor has already resigned. However, such a resignation shall not prevent the matters from being disclosed to the congregation.

### III. Deacons

A. Qualifications - Qualifications for Deacons are similar to the qualifications for Elders and are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-16.

B. Appointment - Deacons of the church shall be composed of men recommended by the members and appointed by the Elders. The Deacons will be recognized as servants to the church. The deacons shall serve and minister under the oversight and direction of the Elders. The number of deacons shall be determined by the Elders according to the needs of the congregation. The term of service for Deacons shall be indefinite.

C. Responsibilities - The deacons shall not be a governing body but are for the purpose of more effectively meeting the needs of the congregation. They shall work with the Elders in ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of those in the church.

#### D. Procedures

1. The Deacons may organize themselves in a manner that they determine most appropriate for ministering to the needs of the church.

2. Any Deacon may become inactive for reasons of health, age, or otherwise by presenting such a request to the Elders. He shall retain his title and position of honor and respect in the church but shall not be expected to attend meetings or share in carrying the burdens of the ministry. He may return to active status upon request.

E. Removal - A deacon may be removed from his position for cause by a unanimous vote of the Elders.

#### IV. Trustees

A. Qualifications - A trustee shall be a man with general business understanding that has been a member of Berea Baptist Church in good standing for a period of at least twelve months. These shall also be men of spiritual depth and maturity.

B. Appointment - The Trustees shall be comprised of men who are called by and serve under the direction of the Elders. There shall be a minimum of three members to serve as Trustees. The Trustees are called to serve a three year term of service in rotation. A trustee may be appointed to serve successive terms without limitation.

C. Responsibilities - The Trustees shall be the legal officers of the church and shall hold in trust the church property. Upon specific vote of the Elders authorizing each action in writing, the Trustees shall have the power to buy, sell, lease, or transfer any church property. Legal documents involving the sale, purchase, lease, or transfer of church property, or other legal documents related to approved matters will require the signatures of The Trustees.

D. Procedures - The Trustees may organize themselves in a manner that they determine most appropriate. (Until such time that a separate body of Deacons is appointed, the Trustees shall serve as Deacons.)

E. Removal - Removal for cause of a Trustee shall be made by the Elders by a unanimous vote in favor of such action.

#### V. Church Treasurer

A. Qualifications - The Church Treasurer shall be a person with general business understanding that has been a member of the Berea Baptist Church in good standing for a period of at least twelve months.

B. Appointment - The Church Treasurer shall be called by and serve under the oversight and direction of the Elders. The Church Treasurer is not necessarily the same person as the Corporate Treasurer.

#### C. Responsibilities

1. It shall be the duty of the Church Treasurer to receive, preserve and pay out, consistent with generally accepted accounting procedures, all money paid or given to the church. Payment of bills and expenses shall be made promptly by check.

2. An itemized report shall be presented to the Trustees and Elders in writing quarterly. Within thirty (30) days after the end of each fiscal year, the Church Treasurer shall render to the church an annual report showing the total amount of receipts, and a summary statement of all disbursements.

3. All books, records and accounts kept by the Church Treasurer shall be considered the property of the church. This shall also be done in accordance with any additional guidelines provided in our Policy and Procedure Guidelines. The books shall be open to inspection at all times to any member of the church, with the exception of the individual giving records of others.

### **Article Eight: Church Committees**

Church Committees shall be established by the Elders as the needs arise. All Chairs of church committees will be approved by the Elders.

### **Article Nine: Amendments**

This Constitution & Bylaws may be amended by a unanimous recommendation of the Elders and a two-thirds majority vote of 50 percent of the eligible voting church members. Such a vote shall take place on a Sunday morning and be announced on Sunday mornings from the pulpit and in the church bulletin for at least two weeks in advance of such vote.

### **Article Ten: Dissolution**

On dissolution of Berea Baptist Church of Lumpkin County by a two-thirds majority vote of 50 percent of the eligible voting church members, the Trustees shall distribute all assets to other religious organizations of like faith and practice. Such a vote shall take place on a Sunday morning and be announced on Sunday mornings from the pulpit and in the church bulletin for at least two weeks in advance of such vote.

### **Article Eleven: Adoption of Constitution & Bylaws**

This Constitution & Bylaws was adopted by a two-thirds majority vote of 50 percent of the eligible voting church members. This vote took place on Sunday August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004 after having been previously announced from the pulpit and in the church bulletin for at least two weeks.

This document shall be in lieu of and supersede and take precedence over any previously existing Rules or Bylaws, any conflicting minutes of the Church, or any traditional/historical procedure or policy of the church and shall become effective on the date of adoption. Nothing herein shall be construed to affect the validity of any previous financial obligation of Berea Baptist Church.

