

# Constitution and By-laws

## Calvary Baptist Church of Tampa, Inc.

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### Preamble

Placing our complete trust by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation and believing the Holy Bible to be the uniquely inspired, infallible, and authoritative Word of God and accepting the historic, distinctive Baptist principles as communicated in the London Baptist Confession of Faith<sup>1</sup>, we band ourselves together as a body of immersed believers and hereby adopt this Constitution and By-Laws as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of and bring glory to our Lord.

### **Article I**

#### Name

The name of this organization shall be Calvary Baptist Church of Tampa, Inc. It is incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the state of Florida.

### **Article II**

#### Purpose

The purpose of Calvary Baptist Church is to glorify God through the worldwide proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation, the edification, encouragement, and equipping of the assembly through expositional<sup>2</sup> preaching and teaching of the whole counsel of God as revealed by the Holy Scriptures, the promotion of Christ-centered, purposeful worship, the development of a healthy body, the administration of the ordinances of the New Testament, and the ordaining of elders.

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<sup>1</sup> Revised by Charles Spurgeon

<sup>2</sup> An expositional sermon is a sermon that takes the main point of a passage of Scripture, makes it the main point of the sermon, and applies it to life today (9 Marks website).

### **Article III**

#### **Church Covenant**

Calvary Baptist Church exists to glorify God by training His disciples to love Him absolutely, love others graciously, and reach the world compassionately.

Therefore, we covenant together to seek to love God absolutely by considering His glory to be the chief purpose of our lives, adoring Him above all else as our highest joy and satisfaction, worshipping Him in spirit and in truth, delighting in and obeying His Word, seeking to live lives marked by holiness, glorying in His grace and mercy, and daily presenting our lives to Him as a living sacrifice, recognizing that we could never love Him had He not first loved us.

Therefore, we covenant together to seek to love one another graciously by helping one another grow toward Christian maturity by bearing one another's burdens, encouraging one another, exhorting one another, praying for one another, confessing our sins to one another, speaking the truth in love to one another, admonishing one another, edifying one another, teaching one another, comforting one another, serving one another, patiently bearing with one another, being hospitable to one another, greeting one another, endeavoring to guard the unity of the Spirit by living in peace with one another, regarding one another as more important than ourselves, caring for one another, exercising our spiritual gifts to serve one another, being kind and tenderhearted to one another, being devoted to one another, accepting one another, forgiving one another, and regularly giving of our resources to meet the needs of the body, recognizing that we could never truly love others apart from a work of His grace in us.

Therefore, we covenant together to seek to reach the world compassionately by actively involving ourselves in the lives of the community around us, being salt and light by living out the Gospel in their presence, desiring to shine forth the excellencies of the One who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light, keeping ourselves unstained from the world, and sharing the truths of the Gospel with courage, clarity, and consideration, recognizing that any fruit is solely a result of God's grace and the work of the Holy Spirit according to His sovereign plan.

### **Article IV**

#### **Statement of Faith**

*The Gospel can be defined in this way: the good news that Jesus Christ, the Righteous Son of God, came to this earth to live the life of righteousness that we could not live and*

*die to pay the penalty for our sins that we could never pay and rose again to give life to all those who believe so that there is now no condemnation for them, only eternal joy and hope and peace and satisfaction. Paul described it this way in 2 Corinthians 8:9 - "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich."*

We believe:

1. God's gospel originates in and demonstrates the holy love of the eternal, triune God: We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This one God, all-knowing and all-powerful, has, in love and grace, purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to restore His fallen creation for His own glory (Gen. 1:26; Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; Eph. 1:3-10; 2:4-9).<sup>3</sup>
2. God's gospel is authoritatively announced in the Scriptures: We believe that God has spoken through the Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments. They are the verbally inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings, the complete and sufficient revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority that stands over every realm of human knowledge and endeavor. Therefore, the Bible is to be believed in all that it affirms, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises (John 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; 3:15-16).

In subscribing to this Doctrinal Statement, we by no means set aside or undervalue any of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. We believe the sixty-six books of both testaments to be God's own written Word, breathed-out to us through the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16). We deem that the knowledge of and adherence to the statements of truth outlined in our Doctrinal Statement is necessary for sound doctrine and thereby requisite for Christian fellowship.

3. God's gospel alone addresses our deepest human need: We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned through the temptation of Satan, corrupting that image. As a result, all humanity is alienated from God and under His wrath and can be rescued, reconciled, and restored only through God's gracious work in Jesus Christ (Gen. 1:26; 2:7, 18-22; Ezek. 18:20; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom. 5:12, 19; 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:21; Eph. 2:1-3, 12).
4. God's gospel is revealed in history supremely through the Person of Jesus Christ: We believe that Jesus Christ, Israel's promised Messiah, is God incarnate, one Person consisting of two natures, fully human and fully divine, who was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, rose bodily from the dead, and ascended into heaven, where, at the right hand of God the Father, He is now our High Priest and Advocate (Matt. 28:5-7; Luke

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<sup>3</sup> Scripture references are representative, not necessarily exhaustive.

1:35; 23:33-34; John 1:1-2; 8:58; 10:25-30; 1 Cor. 15:3-8; Eph. 4:8-10; Heb. 2:17; 3:1; 4:14-15; Titus 2:13; 1 Pet. 2:22).

5. God's gospel is accomplished through the work of Christ: We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, died on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His shed blood and resurrection are the only ground for salvation, and it is through faith alone in Christ that anyone is justified before God (John 3:16; Rom. 3:20, 25; 5:9; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 1:7; 2:8-9; Col. 1:20; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5).

6. God's gospel is applied and empowered by the Holy Spirit: We believe that the Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ by convicting the world, by regenerating sinners into union with Christ, and by indwelling, sealing, guiding, instructing, equipping, and empowering believers for Christ-like living and service (John 3:3-5; 16:7-15; Acts 2:1-4; 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Cor. 1:22-23; Eph. 1:13; Titus 3:5).

7. God's gospel is now embodied in the new community called the church: We believe that the true church is composed of all those who have been saved by God's grace through faith and regeneration by the Holy Spirit and are thereby united together in the body of Christ of which He is the Head. This church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of members of the true church. The two biblically mandated ordinances of the church, baptism and the Lord's Supper, visibly and tangibly express this gospel, strengthening our faith. They are to be celebrated by the church in obedience to Christ, but are not a means of salvation (Matt. 26:26-28; 28:19; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; Acts 2:38, 42, 46; Rom. 6:5; 1 Cor. 11:23-32; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15; 5:23, 32; Col. 1:18; 2:19).

8. God's gospel compels us to Christ-like living and witness to the world: We believe that God's justifying grace in the gospel must not be separated from its sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves, acting with compassion toward all people through the power and grace that He provides. In all that we do, we are to bear witness to the gospel in word and deed, making disciples among all people. (Deut. 6:4-9; Matt. 22:34-40; 25:31-46; 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 4:34; Rom. 12:12; 1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 4:26-27; 5:10-20; Phil. 4:6; Col. 3:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; James 4:7; 5:16; 1 John 3:16-18; 4:4).

9. God's gospel will be brought to fulfillment by the Lord Himself at the end of this age: We believe in the personal and glorious coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with His holy angels, when He will fully establish His kingdom and exercise His role as Judge of all. This coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, requires constant expectancy and should motivate the believer to godly living, sacrificial service, and energetic mission. This is our blessed hope (Matt. 25:31; Mark 8:38; 14:62; Acts 1:6-8; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; Titus 2:13; Jude 14-15; Rev. 1:7).

10. God's gospel calls for a response which determines the eternal destiny of every person: We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel, turning to God in repentance to receive the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that in the

bodily resurrection of the dead, the unbeliever will face judgment and eternal conscious punishment, while the believer will experience eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord, to the praise of His glorious grace (Matt. 3:2; Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:9-13; 2 Cor. 5:6-10; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; Heb. 9:27; Rev. 20:4-15). Amen.

## **Article V**

### **Membership**

#### **Section 1. Admission**

Persons wishing to become members of Calvary Baptist Church shall notify the pastor of their desire. Upon such notification they shall become candidates. A candidate shall meet with an elder to verify that he or she meets the following conditions of membership:

- A. Profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ followed by baptism by immersion
- B. Evidence of being born again
- C. Having read and understood the views of faith and practice of Calvary Baptist Church as stated in the *Constitution & By-laws*.
- D. Currently not under discipline from another church of like faith

Membership shall be granted by a majority vote of the church following a recommendation from the elder(s). That vote will take place after a Sunday service or business meeting.

#### **Section 2. Dismissal**

A member may be dismissed from membership only upon the occurrence of one of the following.

- A. By death
- B. By letter. Any member not currently under church discipline may request a letter of recommendation to another church of like faith.
- C. By exclusion. A member may be dismissed after the exercise of Scriptural church discipline (see Section 3 below).
- D. By voluntary resignation after a meeting with the elder(s).
- E. By a prolonged season of inactivity or absence of six (6) months or more without unusual circumstances. After several attempts by church leadership to restore faithfulness, a person's membership may be terminated after a special quorum (66%).

Restoration to active membership shall be by vote of the church, upon recommendation of the elder(s) after there is satisfactory evidence of a renewed spiritual walk.

#### **Section 3. Discipline**

- A. Charges may be brought against any member of this church showing evidence of: clear continual violation of the church covenant (see Article III), violating the Statement of Faith (see Article IV), or being guilty of any conduct contrary to the principles and practices of this church, as set forth in the Holy Word of God. Such charges must be made to the elder(s) in loving concern and must be made in writing. The elder(s) will then make a thorough investigation and every effort will be made according to the Scripture (Matthew 18:15-17) to restore the individual to fellowship.
- B. Calvary Baptist Church may terminate a person's membership only after significant effort by the elder(s) and the body has failed to bring about restoration to Christ. Exclusion shall be by a majority vote of active members present and voting in a duly called business meeting.
- C. An excluded member can be received back into membership only after repentance and public confession of the sin(s) and following the constitutional procedure for being admitted.

## Article VI

### Church Offices

#### Section 1. Elder(s)

##### A. Overview

Calvary Baptist Church is committed to a plurality of elders. Recognizing that the high standards set forth in scripture for elders may at times make it difficult to have a plurality of elders, therefore, Calvary Baptist Church is committed to encouraging and developing qualified men to become lay elders within the local body. Lay elders are unsalaried.

##### B. Qualifications

The elder(s) shall be men who meet the scriptural qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7<sup>4</sup>, Titus 1:6-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-3. The elder(s) must be fully convinced that the Bible is the Word of God and therefore without error in the original autographs. The elder(s) must adhere to the *Constitution & By-laws* and the statement of faith. The elder(s) must be committed to feeding the flock of God through expositional preaching<sup>5</sup>. The body must continue to recognize the elder(s) as both qualified and gifted by God.

##### C. Duties and Responsibilities

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<sup>4</sup> The qualifications exclude men who have been divorced.

1. The elder(s) ought to devote their time to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.
2. The elder(s) will set the direction and philosophy of Calvary Baptist Church.
3. The elder(s) will dedicate themselves to shepherding and overseeing the body.
4. The elder(s) will, when necessary, appoint committees and organizations to serve the church body.

#### D. Appointment of Elder(s)

1. The elder(s) (and if necessary, those appointed by the elder(s)) will nominate qualified men who have been recognized by the body to serve as elders.
2. For those being nominated from outside the body there will be a time apportioned for the body to evaluate their qualifications.
3. The elder(s) will then bring the nominee before the church for a church vote. A special quorum (66%) is needed to appoint an elder.
4. The elder(s) can serve an indefinite period of time, unless dismissed of his position. See F Dismissal for details.

#### E. Salary

An elder's salary and/or allowance shall be fixed prior to the time of election and may be changed at any regular business meeting of the church provided that the usual public notice of one week has been given previously. The budget committee shall affix the amount.

#### F. Dismissal

If an elder no longer meets the biblical qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-3 or is found to be lacking in his gifting, the church must take prayerful action to remove an elder from his position. Such action may be initiated only by the written accusation of two or three witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19) submitted to the elder(s). After a time of due process, if the accusations are found to be warranted, the elder(s) and/or deacons will call a special business meeting which must be called at least one week in advance to vote for the elder's dismissal. A special quorum must show up and a two-thirds majority is necessary for the elder to continue serving as an elder.

### **Section 2. Deacons**

#### 1. Qualifications

The deacons shall meet the scriptural qualifications of the office set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, having been active members of Calvary Baptist Church for the period of time necessary to observe their qualifications and manner of life.

## 2. Duties and Responsibilities

The deacons are ministering servants of the church whose purpose is to free the time of the elder(s) so that they may fulfill their responsibilities.

## 3. Appointment

The elder(s) will determine the number of deacons that are needed. Then at a scheduled business meeting, members will be able to privately submit the names of individuals whom they feel qualified to serve in the role of deacon. The elder(s) will evaluate those submitted and determine the most qualified to serve based on qualification, need, and/or desire. At an appointed business meeting, the church will vote on those who have been selected to serve as deacon. A special quorum is needed to appoint a deacon.

## 4. Tenure

A deacon is ordained to the ministry of that office at a special service for a period of three years. A deacon may serve consecutive terms if nominated and appointed by church vote.

### Section 3. Clerk

It shall be the duty of the clerk to record the minutes of all regular and special members' meetings of the church, to preserve an accurate roll of the membership, and to render reports as requested by the pastor, the elders, the deacons, or the church. The clerk shall be nominated by the elders and deacons to serve a term of three years. In the absence or incapacity of the clerk the elders shall appoint a member to perform the duties of the church clerk. For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the State of Florida, the clerk shall serve as the secretary of the corporation. The church clerk shall ensure that dated copies of the most recent revision of this constitution shall be available for all church members.

### Section 4. Treasurer

The treasurer, who shall not be an active elder, shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as appropriate. The treasurer shall also be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues and expenses of the church. The responsibility may be delegated with the approval of the elders. The treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. The treasurer shall render to the elders annually, or whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the church. The treasurer shall be nominated by the elders and deacons to serve a term of three years.

## **Article VII**

### **Church Staff**

In order to meet the needs of the church adequately, the elder(s) are at liberty to fill positions, salaried and unsalaried with personnel who are equipped for the task. These positions include church secretaries, youth and music directors, assistants, and other staff members. Salaried personnel may be hired only after the congregation has allocated funds for that position in the budget. The elder(s) are entrusted with the responsibility of dismissing staff members who are remiss in their duties.

## **Article VIII**

### **Church Government**

The church is an organism, a body with Jesus Christ as its authoritative head. The government of the church should be theocratic rather than strictly democratic in its nature. It is not “legislative” (legislating its own rules and policies) but rather “administrative” (carrying out Christ’s rules and policies). The elder(s) of Calvary Baptist Church shall therefore seek to determine God’s will in all matters concerning the business of the church by consulting the Bible for principles and the Holy Spirit for guidance through prayer. The elder(s) will then present their decisions for the church body to vote on. Having followed these steps, we shall consider the decision made by the majority vote to be expressive of God’s will. With this in mind, the following expresses the format for congregational determination of God’s will.

#### **A. Business Meetings**

Business meetings are of four types:

- a. Those initiated by the elder(s). These meetings may be held at any regular church service, as they are needed.
- b. Those initiated by other members. A written request for a business meeting along with the desired motion to be made shall be delivered to the elder(s). After the elder(s) have discussed the motion it may then be acted upon by the church in a business meeting.
- c. Quarterly Business Meeting. The quarterly business meetings shall be conducted in a timely manner as deemed necessary. The purpose of these meetings shall be to present the quarterly financial report and to conduct any other necessary business of the church.
- d. Annual Business Meeting. The annual business meeting for adopting the proposed budget and /or other necessary business shall be held during March or at a special called meeting for that purpose prior to April 1, when the budget is to be in effect. The church fiscal year shall begin April 1 and conclude March 31.

- e. In each case, an agenda shall be posted one week in advance and only those items that appear on the agenda may be voted upon during that meeting.

B. Moderator

The elder(s) or someone appointed by the elder(s) will officiate the elder meetings and business meetings of Calvary Baptist Church.

C. Voters

Any member of the church who is in good standing and is 18 years of age or older may vote.

D. Quorum

- a. Ordinary quorum. Those voting members present at a scheduled, regular business meeting shall constitute a quorum. Fifty-one percent (51%) shall be considered a majority.
- b. Special quorum. Those voting members present at a scheduled, regular business meeting shall constitute a quorum. In cases of especially important matters (i.e., buying and selling property, building a building, calling an elder or deacon, terminating an elder or deacon, or amending the constitution) sixty-six percent (66%) shall be considered a majority.

**Article IX**

*Designated Funds*

A church vote is required to create a specific designated fund (missions, building, etc.). Although a church vote may take place to remove monies from the general fund and place them in specific designated funds, those specific designated funds may not be taken out and placed into the general fund unless said fund is dissolved. They must be used for the purpose for which they were designated.

**Article X**

*Budget Overages*

No single line item in the annual expenses can be exceeded by more than \$500 and the gross expenses cannot be exceeded by 5% without the matter first being approved by the church.

## **Article XI**

### Amendments

This *Constitution & By-laws* may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members present at any regular or special business meeting, providing the elder(s) have discussed the matter at least two weeks before such meeting, and announcement made to the church on the Sunday preceding the meeting.

## **Article XII**

### Dissolution

In the event that the church dissolves, all assets will be liquidated, all debts paid, and the balance distributed to non-profit organizations of like faith. None of its assets or holdings shall be divided among its members or individuals.