

**CONSTITUTION  
BETHANY BAPTIST CHURCH**

Salem, Oregon

*Amended December 15, 2002 & December 5, 2004*

**ARTICLE I**

NAME

**Section 1.1** The name of this church shall be Bethany Baptist Church of Salem. It was incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the State of Oregon on May 8, 1970.

**ARTICLE II**

PURPOSE

**Section 2.1** The purpose of this church is to bring glory to God by (1) bringing people to new life in Christ and into the membership of his body, the church; (2) building them to Christlike spiritual maturity; and (3) equipping them for their ministry in the church and their life's mission in the world.

**ARTICLE III**

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

**Section 3.1** Governmental Policy

1. Authority – This church shall be subject only to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. His will regarding matters of faith and practice are known through the inspired, inerrant and authoritative Word of God.
2. Government – Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, works through His body. Thus, the government of this church is vested solely in the body of believers who maintain membership in this local assembly.
3. Leadership – The local assembly, recognizing the gifting and calling of certain men in the body of Christ, elects them to spiritual and organizational oversight of the local church. These men serve on one of two councils:
  - A. Shepherds Council – The governing leadership body of Bethany Baptist Church shall be known as the Shepherds Council, which shall be comprised of men recognized and elected by the membership of this church to be its shepherds in accordance with Section 6.1. These men function as elders, also known as shepherds or pastors.

- B. Deacons Council – The Deacons Council shall be composed of men elected to the office of deacon in accordance with Section 6.3, and shall be under the authority of, and responsible to, the Shepherds Council.

**Section 3.2** Trustees

The Deacons Council shall act as the legal trustees of the church for external affairs.

**Section 3.3** Representative Officers

For legal purposes, the senior pastor shall act as chairman of the corporation, the church treasurer shall act as corporate treasurer, and the chairman of the Deacons Council shall act as corporate secretary.

**ARTICLE IV**  
**AUTONOMY**

**Section 4.1** This church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but recognizes and sustains the obligation of mutual counsel and cooperation with other churches of like faith. This church reserves the right to join or withdraw from any association or ecclesiastical organization, as it desires by vote of the membership.

**ARTICLE V**  
**MEMBERSHIP**

**Section 5.1** Qualifications

Qualifications for membership in this church are the following: (1) acceptance of Jesus Christ as personal Savior as demonstrated in testimony and life, (2) baptism (immersion in water) as a believer in Christ, (3) acceptance of the Word of God as one's rule of faith and practice, (4) subscription to the doctrinal statement of this church as a partial expression of that rule, and (5) agreement to be governed by this constitution.

**Section 5.2** Reception

No one shall be received into the membership except upon personal confession of faith in Christ, either in baptism, or by verbal testimony. When an individual comes from another church of like faith and order, church letters shall be requested and, if received, be used as indication of previous baptism and standing in the church. Upon the recommendation of the Shepherds Council, and a three-fourths vote of the members present and voting, the new member shall be received immediately into full membership rights and privileges.

### **Section 5.3** Rights and Responsibilities

All members shall have equal rights unless stated otherwise in this constitution. The right to vote shall be vested in members 16 years of age and over. Individual members of this church have no church property rights. Upon termination of membership they are not entitled to any interest in the church assets, and shall not be allowed a voice in the disposition of said assets.

Members will honor, esteem, and pray for their pastors regularly, and assist them in carrying out the ministry of the church. They will use their God-given talents, gifts and resources for the benefit of the church. They will endeavor to preserve the unity of the church. If for any reason they are unable to harmonize with others, they will seek not to disrupt its fellowship, but will quietly withdraw from its membership.

### **Section 5.4** Mutual Care Membership

Mutual Care Membership is hereby established for college students, armed services personnel, and other people of temporary residence in the Salem area who maintain a legal residence elsewhere and are members of a church of like faith and order. Mutual care members shall meet all the standard requirements for membership. They shall have full membership privileges and responsibilities, including the right to vote and hold office, both elected and appointed. Mutual Care members shall not be counted for inter-church statistics. They may not be sent as a messenger of this church, be granted a letter of transfer, or be ordained or licensed by this church. All of these rights remain with the member's home church.

### **Section 5.5** Inactive Membership

It shall be the responsibility of the Shepherds Council to endeavor to make personal contact with members who are not demonstrating an active interest in the life of the church. Any member who attends worship services fewer than two times in three months will automatically be considered as inactive and shall lose the right of vote without any further process.

At the discretion of the Shepherds Council, individuals who are in some way limited from meeting this requirement (i.e. physical limitations, missionary service, military service, vocational assignment) may be exempted. A written communication shall be sent to the member's last known address. If there is no response, the Shepherds Council shall recommend dismissal to the church. If their response is a desire to resume active participation in the church, the Shepherds Council may, upon satisfactory interview with the member, restore their membership rights.

### **Section 5.6** Discipline

In order to promote purity and maintain peace, a local church has the scriptural responsibility to prayerfully and lovingly restore errant members. Members whose behavior continues in violation of scriptural commands are to be disciplined. The primary

goals of church discipline are to seek the restoration of a sinning believer and the protection of the church.

1. Composition of the Discipline Committee

The Shepherds Council shall serve as the Discipline Committee. In cases where the accused is a shepherd, or related by marriage or birth to a shepherd, that shepherd shall not serve on the committee.

2. The Peacemaking Process

The Bible gives the following pattern for resolving conflicts between Christians:

- A. Overlook minor offenses, offering acceptance and forgiveness to your brother. (Prov. 19:11)
- B. If the offense is too serious to walk away from, then go and show your brother his fault in private, seeking reconciliation. (Matt. 18:15)
- C. If the dispute cannot be resolved in private, involve one or two other trusted, mature Christians, one of whom should be a shepherd. (Matt. 18:16)
- D. If the dispute still cannot be resolved, the entire Discipline Committee will intervene, offering counsel and instruction to both parties on resolving the problem. (Matt. 18:17)
- E. If a Christian refuses to listen to the counsel of the Discipline Committee, the committee will recommend that the church withdraw fellowship from them, including loss of membership rights. This process is detailed in Section 5.7.

Offenses are inevitable and it is important that they be settled privately according to the Biblical pattern. Members are to seek reconciliation in a spirit of love when offenses occur, whether noticed by the offender or the offended person. No report of a derogatory nature against any member is to be communicated to others or before the church in a business meeting.

**Section 5.7** Removal

Members may be removed from membership for reasons of death, withdrawal, transfer, inactivity, or discipline. Recommendations for removal because of inactivity or discipline must be passed by a majority vote of the members present and voting. A member may be dismissed to the fellowship of another church of like faith and order by letter of recommendation upon approval of the Shepherds Council and majority vote of the members present and voting. A member who joins another church or requests in writing that his/her membership be withdrawn shall be removed from the membership of the church without requiring a vote of the church. If a disciplinary matter is involved, the removal must come before the church.

## **ARTICLE VI CHURCH OFFICERS**

### **Section 6.1** Shepherds

#### 1. Their Number

Any number of shepherds may be elected as is considered necessary to meet the needs of the church. If there are not men both qualified and willing to serve as shepherds, the available positions on the Shepherds Council shall be left vacant.

#### 2. Their Qualifications

##### A. Basic

He must have been a member of Bethany Baptist Church for sufficient time to be recognized by the leadership as a shepherd; and he must be in support of the doctrinal positions and directional goals of the church and pastoral staff.

##### B. Scriptural

- (1) He must have moral integrity as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 & Titus 1:6-9.
- (2) He must be, if married, a happily married man with his household under proper scriptural management and with a wife who willingly grants her permission (1 Tim. 3:4-5, Eph. 5:22-6:4, & 1 Pet. 3:1-7)
- (3) He must have a properly motivated desire to serve as a shepherd (1 Tim. 3:1);
- (4) He must have demonstrated leadership in that he has proven himself in ministry.
- (5) He must have attained a knowledge of the Bible to the extent of Titus 1:9, as measured by those currently serving on the Shepherds Council.
- (6) He must have demonstrated an ability to teach, disciple, and counsel others to the satisfaction of those currently serving on the Shepherds Council.

#### 3. Their Appointment

Members of the church will have opportunity annually to nominate from the membership men to serve as shepherds. The Shepherds Council will evaluate nominees and recommend qualified candidates to the congregation. Appointment to the Shepherds Council will be affirmed by a three-fourths vote of the membership present and voting.

4. Their Term of Service

Shepherds shall serve in three-year terms. The membership, after each three-year term of service, may reappoint shepherds who are qualified and willing to serve another term.

5. Their Removal from Office

Shepherds may be removed from office either by resignation or by the vote of the Shepherds Council for failure either to live up to the Biblical qualifications of a shepherd or by failure to continue to serve the needs of the congregation.

6. Their Responsibilities

All the Scriptural responsibilities of shepherds fall under three general categories: those of FEEDING, LEADING, and PROTECTING the flock.

A. Feeding the Flock

Shepherds are to preach and teach God's Word (1 Tim. 5:17, Heb. 13:7), to exhort and admonish believers (Tit. 1:9, 1 Thess. 5:12), and to model a godly life (Heb. 13:7, 1 Pet. 5:2-3).

B. Leading the Flock

Shepherds are to lead and guide the church (1 Thess. 5:12, 1 Tim. 3:5), "rule" and "direct" the church (1 Tim. 5:17), decide important doctrinal issues (Acts 15:28), establish the Scriptural priorities for the church (Acts 20:27), "oversee" the church (Acts 20:28, 1 Thess. 5:12), and have "authority" in the church (Heb. 13:17)

C. Protecting the Flock

Shepherds are to guard against false teaching (Acts 20:28-31), refute false teachers and scoffers (Titus 1:9), preserve the unity of the church (Eph. 4:3, 11-13), and pray for the needs of the church (Jam. 5:14, Acts 6: 4).

7. Their Internal Organization

The Shepherds Council shall elect annually from its own number a vice-chairman to provide leadership in their ministry in the absence of the senior pastor. They shall also elect a secretary to keep permanent written minutes of their meetings. Two-thirds of the shepherds must be present for a quorum. A majority vote is required unless otherwise specified in this constitution.

## 8. Bringing Business to the Shepherds Council

Any member desiring to present an item of business to the Shepherds Council may do so by contacting the chairman or vice-chairman two weeks prior to a regular meeting, stating the subject to be presented and requesting that it be placed on the agenda.

### **Section 6.2** Pastoral and Ministry Staff

[Note: It is recognized that “pastors” and “shepherds” are equivalent terms biblically. For the purpose of church structure, it should be recognized that “pastor” refers to a shepherd who is remunerated for his shepherding, and therefore is free to give greater time and energy to his ministry.]

#### 1. Senior Pastor

##### A. His Qualifications.

The senior pastor shall meet the qualifications of an elder found in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 & Titus 1:6-9. He shall be licensed or ordained into the ministry by a church of like faith and order, and shall be in agreement with the doctrinal positions and associations held by this church.

##### B. His Call.

When it is necessary to call a senior pastor, the Shepherds Council shall appoint one of their members to act as chairman of a pulpit committee. The pulpit committee shall consist of the chairman, as well as four additional members of the church. The remaining pastors, if any, shall serve in an advisory capacity to the pulpit committee. The pulpit committee shall develop its own operating procedures. Only one candidate at a time shall be recommended to the church at a special business meeting announced from the pulpit two weeks in advance. The vote shall be taken by written ballot and a call extended if the candidate receives at least a three-fourths vote.

##### C. His Responsibilities.

- (1) The senior pastor serves as the spiritual, administrative, and educational head of the church. He shall serve as the leader of the church in all its activities and shall be the moderator. In this capacity, he occupies the chairman position of the Shepherds Council. He shall carry out the decisions of the Shepherds Council and shall have power, as delegated on their behalf, to execute all actions so deemed by the Shepherds Council and the membership.
- (2) The senior pastor will be the administrative head over the pastoral and ministry staff of the church. He shall have the authority, with

the concurrence of a majority of the Shepherds Council, to dismiss other pastoral and ministry staff.

- (3) The senior pastor shall regularly preach, administer the ordinances, and tenderly watch over and promote the spiritual strength of the congregation. He will seek through creative leadership to direct the church in establishing and attaining goals for the honor and glory of God.
- (4) He shall, by virtue of his office, be welcome as a voting member of any board or committee meeting that he attends.

D. His Term of Service

The senior pastor shall serve an indefinite term of service. He may resign at any time, giving thirty days notification in writing to the Shepherds Council, unless otherwise mutually agreed upon. The resignation shall be accepted without being voted on by the church.

E. His Removal from Office.

Severance of the pastoral relationship may be initiated by the Shepherds Council due to unsatisfactory service, and requires a two-thirds majority vote of the shepherds. Their recommendation must be approved at a special business meeting announced two weeks in advance, and communicated to the entire membership in writing. The vote shall be taken by written ballot, and a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting is necessary for dismissal. In the case of a serious moral or doctrinal deviation, the Shepherds Council shall immediately remove the pastor from office. In the event of his resignation or removal from office for any reason, the pastor will be provided thirty days salary and benefits.

2. Other Pastoral and Ministry Staff

The senior pastor, along with the Shepherds Council and other pastors, will determine the needs for additional pastoral and ministry staff in the church.

A. Pastoral Staff

The senior pastor shall recommend qualified men to work with him on the pastoral staff. His recommendations must be confirmed by a three-fourths vote of the Shepherds Council. Their qualifications, call by the church, term of service, and removal from office are the same as that of the senior pastor. Their responsibilities will be clearly stated in writing as part of their call to the church. Associate pastors, as fellow shepherds, will be included in the Shepherds Council and have right of vote. They will also, by virtue of their office, be welcome as a voting member of any board or committee meeting that they attend.

B. Ministry Staff.

Part-time and full-time ministry staff serves under the authority and direction of the senior pastor and Shepherds Council. Such positions are approved by the church budgeting process and selected by the senior pastor, in coordination with the shepherds and deacons. The authority of these positions is non-pastoral, and is given by and accountable to the Shepherds Council.

**Section 6.3** Deacons

1. Their Number

Any number of deacons may be elected as is considered necessary to meet the needs of the church. If there are not men both qualified and willing to serve as deacons, the available positions on the Deacons Council shall be left vacant.

2. Their Qualifications

The deacons shall consist of church members who have been members in good standing for at least one year. They shall be men who meet the scriptural qualifications found in I Timothy 3:8-13 and who concur with the doctrinal positions and directional goals of the church and pastoral staff.

3. Their Appointment

Members of the church will have opportunity annually to nominate from the membership men to serve as deacons. The Shepherds Council will evaluate nominees and, in conjunction with the Deacons Council, recommend qualified candidates to the membership. Appointment to the Deacons Council will be affirmed by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting.

4. Their Term of Service

The term of office shall be three years. The membership, after each three-year term of service, may reappoint deacons who are qualified and willing to serve another term. As much as possible, one third of the deacons shall be elected annually. If vacancies occur, the Shepherds Council may call for a special election or leave the position vacant until the next annual meeting.

5. Their Removal from Office

Deacons may be removed from office either by resignation or by the vote of the Shepherds Council for failure either to live up to the biblical qualifications of a deacon or by failure to continue to serve the needs of the congregation.

6. Their Responsibilities
  - A. To free the shepherds so that they may more effectively shepherd the flock.
  - B. To serve the practical needs of the congregation as ministers of mercy.
  - C. To exercise servant leadership in the congregation.
  - D. To receive and distribute funds for the relief of the physical and material needs of the membership and others in whom the church has interest.
  - E. To provide oversight of the property and buildings of the church, as well as working with the shepherds in planning and carrying out future building needs.
  - F. To oversee church finances, and assist the shepherds in the development of an annual budget to present to the membership.
  - G. To assist in the administration of the ordinances of the church.
  - H. To oversee the usher and greeter ministries during worship services.
  - I. To serve under the direction and authority of the shepherds, and undertake ministry assignments given by the shepherds.

7. Their Internal Organization

The deacons shall elect annually from their own number a chairman and vice-chairman to provide leadership in their ministry. They shall also elect a secretary to keep permanent written minutes of their meetings. Two-thirds of the deacons must be present for a quorum. A majority vote is required unless otherwise specified in this constitution. They shall elect committees from their own number as is necessary to carry out their responsibilities.

8. Bringing Business to the Deacons Council

Any member desiring to present an item of business to the Deacons Council may do so by contacting the chairman or vice-chairman two weeks prior to a regular meeting stating the subject to be presented and requesting that it be placed on the agenda.

**ARTICLE VII**  
**OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES**

**Section 7.1** Elected Officers

1. Nomination and Election

Six weeks before the annual meeting nominating forms shall be sent to each active member with the following information:

- A. a list of incumbent and retiring church officers;
- B. qualifications for offices;
- C. a list of positions to be filled.

Nominations are to be returned four weeks before the annual meeting. The Shepherds Council shall consider the scriptural qualifications of the nominees, their example of Christian character and participation in the life of the church, and the relative frequency of their nomination. Consent to serve must be given by the nominees. The final slate of one or more nominees for each position shall be posted at least two weeks prior to the annual meeting. No nominations from the floor shall be made at the time of election. A majority vote of members present and voting is required for election unless specified otherwise in this constitution. If there is only one nominee for a position, two-thirds of the members present and voting must approve of his or her election.

2. Shepherds and Deacons

Information on the qualifications, election and responsibilities of shepherds and deacons is in Section 6.

3. Financial Secretary

The Financial Secretary shall maintain an accurate record of and deposit all receipts. He or she shall keep a confidential record of individual giving and issue quarterly and annual receipts to donors.

4. Church Treasurer

The Church Treasurer shall keep an accurate record of all expenditures and shall disburse only when authorized. He or she shall present a monthly financial report to the deacons and an annual report to the church.

**Section 7.2** Appointed Officers and Ministry Teams

The Shepherds Council shall appoint any officers and ministry teams considered beneficial to the church's ministry, and communicate such appointments to the membership.

**Section 7.3** Organization and Duties

Unless otherwise specified in this constitution, the organization and duties of ministry teams will be left to the officers and leadership of those ministries. Ministry leaders are, in turn, accountable to the Shepherds Council.

**Section 7.4** Vacancies

Vacancies occurring during the year in elected or appointed positions (other than shepherds and deacons) shall be filled by appointment by the Shepherds Council.

## **ARTICLE VIII MEETING**

### **Section 8.1** Congregational Services

The church shall meet regularly on the first day of the week, and at other times by the call of the Senior Pastor or Shepherds Council for the purposes of worship, evangelism, instruction, edification, and fellowship.

### **Section 8.2** Annual Business Meeting

An annual business meeting shall be held prior to the start of the fiscal year. Among the matters of business shall be the election of shepherds and deacons, communication of appointed officers and ministry teams, and approval of the annual budget. The pastors, shepherds and deacons shall present written reports of the prior year's ministries.

A preliminary estimate of total receipts and expenditures shall be given at the annual meeting. As soon as possible after the close of the fiscal year, a complete financial report shall be presented to the church for approval at a regular service of the church.

### **Section 8.3** Special Business Meetings

Special business meetings may be called by the Shepherds Council or Deacons Council, or by a quorum of the church. Public notice shall be given from the pulpit for two weeks prior to the meeting, stating the business to be conducted. No other business may be conducted at the special business meeting.

Members may be received or dismissed (except when discipline is involved) at any congregational service of the church without prior notice.

### **Section 8.4** Quorum

The annual meeting and all special business meetings require one fifth of the active membership for a quorum. When voting on the calling or dismissing of a pastor, one third of the active voting membership shall constitute a quorum. A majority vote of the members present and voting is necessary unless specified otherwise in the constitution.

### **Section 8.5** Rules of Order

The latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order will be used as a general guide when conducting business meetings. All business is to be handled in accordance with the Word of God and the guidelines of this constitution.

**ARTICLE IX**  
**CHURCH YEAR**

**Section 9.1** The church fiscal year shall be from July 1 to June 30.

**ARTICLE X**  
**LICENSING AND ORDINATION**

**Section 10.1** Licensing

When a man in this membership is called to the Christian ministry and desires to be licensed, he shall make his desire known to the Shepherds Council. The shepherds will interview and examine the man concerning his desires for ministry, his qualifications for ministry, his understanding of the Word of God, and his training and experience in ministry. If satisfied, the shepherds may recommend the candidate to the church for licensure, and upon a three-fourths majority vote, a certificate of license shall be granted. The duration of the license shall be for one year, and becomes invalid once the licensee removes his membership from the church. A license may be renewed at the annual business meeting of the church, at which time the licensee must submit a written report which shall include: (1) a statement as to the exercise of his ministry; (2) a statement as to progress made spiritually, academically, and practically in experience; (3) plans for the coming year; and (4) a request for continued licensure. The shepherds will recommend renewal or non-renewal of each license, with a three-fourths majority vote of the members present and voting required for continued approval.

**Section 10.2** Ordination

A licensee desiring ordination shall make his desire known to the Shepherds Council, who, with the approval of the church, will call for an ordination council. An examination council of invited messengers from churches of like faith and practice shall thoroughly examine the candidate for ordination as to his call to ministry, education, Christian experience, reputation, character, doctrine, and demonstrated ability in ministry. The council shall make a recommendation concerning the candidate to the church, and upon a three-fourths majority vote, the church shall proceed with ordination at a future date as agreed upon by both the church and the candidate.

**Section 10.3** Guidelines

No one may be licensed or ordained by this church to the gospel ministry unless they have demonstrated their ability in ministry to the satisfaction of the shepherds, and meet the qualifications of an elder set forth in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The church shall have the right to revoke the license or ordination credentials granted by this church, or of any member of this church, should the church, in its judgment, have sufficient reason for such action. A recommendation to revoke a license or ordination shall be presented to the church in a business meeting called for such a purpose, and, upon majority vote of the members present and voting, shall immediately take effect.

**ARTICLE XI**  
**DISPOSITION OF CHURCH PROPERTY**

**Section 11.1** Division

In case of organic division of the church membership, the church property shall belong to those members who abide by this constitution and subscribe to the church's doctrinal statement. If both sides meet these requirements, those members in the majority shall retain the property.

**Section 11.2** Dissolution

Should a condition arise where, for any reason, the work of this church cannot continue, after all its debts have been satisfied, the church property shall be transferred to such nonprofit organizations that are in agreement with the principles and doctrinal beliefs of this church. This action will be determined by majority vote of the remaining active members. None of the assets shall be given to any individual member.

**ARTICLE XII**  
**AMENDMENTS**

**Section 12.1** This constitution may be amended at a special business meeting by a two-thirds vote by ballot of active members present and voting. The doctrinal statement of church may be amended at a special business meeting by a three-fourths vote by ballot of active members present and voting. Proposed amendments must be announced and posted two weeks prior to the meeting.