

Cowboy Church of Southwest Washington

Constitution and Bylaws

PREAMBLE

Under the guidance and leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ, we the members of Cowboy Church of Southwest Washington adopt the following constitution in order to declare and preserve the principles of our faith, the freedom of our church, and the rights and responsibilities of our individual members.

ARTICLE I – Name

The name of this body shall be Cowboy Church of Southwest Washington.

ARTICLE II – Purpose

The church is organized and maintained to fulfill the following Mission Purpose Statement: The mission of Cowboy Church of Southwest Washington is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, to lead souls to the Lord Jesus Christ in salvation, and to disciple and teach them who they are in Christ Jesus, and how to live a victorious life in their covenant rights and privileges. The church will accomplish this mission by holding to these values:

Simplicity- The church will strive to keep all things it does as simple as possible.

Non-judgmental approach- The church will foster a non-judgmental atmosphere in all it does, accepting people just as they are, just as Christ himself does.

Cultural relevance/Western Heritage- The church will make sure that all it does, including all of its programming and ministries will be geared toward reaching people in the western culture and those who love it.

Practice of Biblical Christianity- The church will practice biblical Christianity. This will be practiced by the leadership and the congregation.

Empowerment with Accountability- The church will strive to empower as many people as it can to serve Christ through the church and bring out the giftedness in them while holding them accountable for their actions and commitments.

Power of the Gospel- The church believes in the power of the gospel for salvation of souls and healing of body, mind and soul.

ARTICLE III – Authority

While independent and sovereign in its own realm, this body recognizes the absolute sovereignty and independence of the churches affiliated with it. It shall in no wise attempt to exercise a single attribute of power or authority over any church.

ARTICLE IV – Policy and Relationship

Jesus Christ is the head of the church; the true source of all that the church is and does, and His glory is to be the objective of every act, function, and motive of the body, both individually and corporately. It is before Him that all other leadership must bow. He communicates his will for the church through His word, the Bible. He gives additional guidance by means of the specific leading of the Holy Spirit who indwells the heart of each believer. He calls forth leaders for the church to whom He gives responsibility for the oversight of the church body and the shepherding of its members. The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose its membership and leadership. All internal groups created and empowered by the church shall exist to further the purpose of the church. They will be accountable to the church. As an autonomous local church, this church is not subject to the control of any ecclesiastical body. If an entity this church cooperates with ceases to agree with or support the mission of this church, this church reserves the right to disassociate with that entity.

ARTICLE V – ORDINANCES

SECTION I. BAPTISM

A church is understood to be a fellowship of baptized believers brought together to carry out the work of Jesus Christ. A baptized believer is one who has been baptized according to scripture and understands baptism to be a symbol of the salvation which has already been accepted in their life by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

SECTION II. THE LORD’S SUPPER

The church will observe the Lord’s Supper on a regular basis as led by the Pastor. The Lord’s Supper is a symbolic act whereby the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of Christ and anticipate His second coming. This observance is open to anyone who has accepted Jesus Christ as their personal savior and is seeking His righteousness.

ARTICLE VI – AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may be amended by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the active resident members present at a business meeting called for that purpose. Amendments may be proposed by the Elders or by written petition signed by 25% of the active resident members and duly presented to the Elders. Proposed amendments for church consideration shall be announced at the regular worship service and made available in written form to the congregation two weeks prior to the called business meeting in which they will be voted on.

Bylaws

ARTICLE I– MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 1. ESTABLISHING MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Cowboy Church of Southwest Washington is open to anyone who meets the following qualifications:

- A. A personal commitment of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.
- B. Baptism according to scripture after faith in Christ as a testimony of salvation.

Membership may be established in the following ways:

A. Letter

Candidates who are members in good standing of another church of like faith and order may petition the Cowboy Church to acquire a letter of membership from their previous church.

B. Statement

Candidates who have previously been members of another church of like faith and order, but are unable to obtain a letter of membership from said church, may join by affirming that they are baptized believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, holding to the historic teachings of Christianity, and desiring membership in the Cowboy Church of Southwest Washington.

C. Baptism

Candidates accepting Christ as their Savior and requesting Christian baptism according to scripture will be accepted as members upon baptism. All candidates for membership shall give a verbal testimony of their conversion, baptism, and walk with Christ to a pastor or elder.

SECTION 2. RIGHTS OF MEMBER

Each member present, 18 years of age and older, shall be entitled to one (1) vote on each matter submitted for a vote at any called business meeting. The right of a member to vote shall cease upon the termination of his membership in the church. Members have the right to vote if they have been in regular attendance for the past 6 months. Members have the right to vote on the following matters: the call of the pastor and other professional ministerial staff, the election of elders, the annual church budget, indebtedness associated with land acquisition and/or building improvements, cumulative indebtedness for all other aspects of church business that exceeds 20% of the annual church budget, the disposition of all or substantially all of the assets of the church, the merger or dissolution of the church, and any other matter submitted by the elders to the church for a vote.

ARTICLE II– MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP

SECTION 1. PASTOR

A. Call

Upon the pastor's termination, a business meeting will be called and the church will elect a pastor search team. This team will consist of no fewer than two and no more than eight members. This team will seek out and evaluate prospective pastoral candidates until they achieve complete consensus on a single candidate. They will then report to the board members who will set a time and date for the candidate to be received by the church. On that date, a business meeting shall be called and after a full discussion, a vote will be taken by secret ballot. A three-fourths (3/4) vote of the church members present and voting is required to extend a call. If a call is not extended by the church to the candidate, or if the candidate declines to accept, then the pastor search team will begin a new search and come before the church with a second recommendation. This method will proceed until a pastor is secured.

B. Duties

The pastor shall be the spiritual leader of the congregation. In that capacity, under the Leadership of Jesus Christ, he shall preach and teach the word of God, lead the church in regular worship services, administer the ordinances of the church, serve as moderator at business meetings, provide leadership to the ministerial staff, serve as overall administrator of the church, and generally fulfill all his pastoral duties as set forth in Scripture.

C. Termination

The pastor's duties with the church may be terminated by resignation, death, or dismissal. Such dismissal will require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present and voting at a called business meeting. The moderator for such a meeting will be a disinterested third party appointed by the board members.

SECTION 2. PROFESSIONAL MINISTERIAL STAFF

A. Call

Professional ministerial staff sufficient for fulfilling the church's mission will be employed by the church. Such ministerial staff will require two-thirds (2/3) vote of the board upon the recommendation of the search team.

B. Duties

Professional ministerial staff persons will have specific and written job descriptions as outlined by the pastor and Personnel Team.

C. Termination

The service of professional staff persons may be terminated by resignation, death, or a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Board.

SECTION 3. ASSOCIATE AND/OR LAY PASTORS

A. Purpose and Function

Lay pastors shall serve as: Extensions of the Pastor They are directed by the pastor to help him carry out ministry duties. They are appointed and replaced by the pastor at his discretion.

Resource People

Lay Pastors may be attached to one or more ministry teams. Lay Pastors do not rule or lead the teams, they resource the team and act as a liaison between the team and the pastor.

Ministers in Worship

Lay Pastors may be called on to participate in the worship service, i.e. announcements, prayer requests, administering ordinances, assisting in baptism etc. Lay Pastors may also be called upon to bring devotions, preach, pray or lead bible studies depending on their gifts, talents and spiritual maturity.

Ministers to the Congregation

Lay Pastors help the pastor minister to the needs of the congregation in many ways, such as, visitation, meeting member's physical needs as well as the physical needs of the church. Lay pastors shall be appointed as needed by the senior pastor. If there is no pastor they may be appointed by the board members.

C. Qualifications of Lay Pastor

Lay pastors must be active resident members in good standing, be growing in the Lord and have an active daily relationship with Jesus. Lay pastors must have a stable home life and be respected by others and not engage in activities that would bring reproach to the Lord or the church. Divorce alone is not grounds for disqualification.

D. Term of Office

Lay pastors will be appointed to a one year term, but may serve multiple terms by mutual consent of the senior pastor, the board members, and the lay pastor involved.

E. Removal

A Lay pastor may be removed before their term of office expires by death, resignation, or dismissal by the pastor and or board members.

SECTION 4. ELDERS

A. Purpose and Function

Elders shall serve to provide spiritual leadership and accountability to the church in accordance with scripture. They will provide a brotherhood of support and accountability for the pastor, assist the

ministry teams with difficult issues, serve as arbiters in matters of conflict or church discipline, and in general provide spiritual leadership, guidance, and assistance wherever and whenever appropriate.

Spiritual Leadership

Elders model what it means to be Christ like. Elders are an example for the congregation of how to live a Christian life, this includes how to relate to other Christians, how to relate to non-believers, how to be godly and have an active personal relationship with Jesus.

A Brotherhood of Support and Accountability for the Pastor.

Elders must be committed to the Pastor. Elders act as a buffer between the Pastor and his critics; they also are an accountability group for the pastor, prayer partners for the pastor and friends of the pastor. Elders are to meet with the pastor on a consistent regular basis for consultation, prayer and fellowship.

A Limited Decision Making Body

The only time when the elders become a decision making body is when (1) they are called on by the Pastor to help him make a decision, (2) when a ministry team cannot reach consensus on an issue or asks for the elders help, (3) when the functional structure does not exist or breaks down, (4) in matters of church discipline.

Limited Visible Involvement

Elders do not have ongoing roles in the worship service and are not overly involved in the various ministry teams. Elders are not an oversight body for the finances, personnel or pastor unless it is determined that unbiblical, immoral or unethical behavior has occurred. They can be enlisted by the pastor, personnel team or the audit team if it is deemed necessary by any of these.

Dual Roles

Elders cannot have dual leadership roles. When a candidate for elder is nominated he must be willing to step down from any other role in leadership that he occupies. Other leadership roles include; lay pastor, team leader, and team member, paid staff or worship leader.

Confidentiality

All discussions between the elders are strictly confidential; this includes not discussing elder issues with the spouses of elders or other church members. Breaking confidentiality is grounds for removal. Elders do not meet without all the elders present including the pastor if this is possible and absolutely never meet to discuss problems about the pastor or another elder without them present. The Pastor-Elder and Elder-Elder relationships must be 100% transparent.

B. Qualifications

God's word gives us specific qualifications, in 1 Timothy 3:1-12, for those who are called to serve as leaders in our church. Below are the biblical and culturally relevant qualifications that apply to Elders in Cowboy Church of SWWA.

Verse 1 - Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.

1. Elder must acknowledge the importance and respect God gives to someone called to lead the church.

Verse 2 - Now the overseer must be above reproach...

2. Elder must be someone with a good testimony in his home, the church, and in the culture God has called this church to reach. The church acknowledges that none are without sin; an Elder must be someone who is seeking righteousness.

Verse 2 - the spouse of but one

3. If an Elder is married, they must have only one spouse and love him/her as Christ loves the church. Previous divorce alone is not grounds for disqualification.

4. Elders are called to handle very difficult situations at times and must be able to control their personal feelings, emotions, and actions in order to seek what God would have them do and not their own desires.

Verse 2 - respectable...

5. An Elder must be a person who is respected in the church, at home, and in the culture. An Elder must respect people in his family, the church, and his community.

Verse 2 - hospitable...

6. An Elder must be willing to open his home and give of his time to meet and serve the people in the church.

Verse 2 - able to teach...

7. An Elder must spend time in Gods Word and be comfortable and willing to instruct others in the church in studying the Bible.

Verse 3 - not given to drunkenness..

8. An Elder must not be controlled by alcohol or anything else that impairs his ability to make sound decisions or damages his testimony in the church, home, or culture.

Verse 3 - not violent but gentle...

9. An Elder must be able to handle situations calmly without becoming verbally, physically, or emotionally abusive.

Verse 3 - not quarrelsome...

10. An Elder must never be involved in matters that cause dissension in the church.

11. An Elder must be someone who has led others in our church, (ministry teams, worship, etc.) or is active in church events/services.
12. The following qualification will go into effect no later than five (5) years following adoption of this constitution. An Elder must be an active resident member of the Cowboy Church of Southwest Washington for no less than two (2) years and be in good standing with the Church.
13. An Elder must have an understanding and desire to see that the Mission of the Cowboy Church of Southwest Washington and its values are upheld.
14. An Elder cannot have a spouse or family member who serves as paid or volunteer staff including but not limited to church clerk, church secretary or church finance secretary.
15. Elders must be willing to rearrange their daily schedules or do whatever it takes to ensure the Mission of the Church and any business necessary is fulfilled.
16. If arguments and disagreements arise in the church an Elder must be able to take a neutral position, suspend judgment, hear both sides, and seek only Gods direction based on Scripture.
17. Elders must be those of age and maturity.

C. Selection and Term of Office

1. On or about January 1, of each year, the church will be asked to submit in writing the names of those to serve as elders. These names will be screened by the pastor and existing elders to ensure that the nominees meet the qualifications set forth above. If it is determined that a nominee is qualified, he will be considered by the elders as a candidate.
2. Once a list of qualified candidates has been assembled, existing elders will select new elders on or before January 31. The three (3) candidates selected by the existing elders will serve as elders until the next selection unless precluded by death, resignation, or removal. An elder may not serve more than three (3) consecutive terms.

D. Removal

Any active resident member of the church may bring a written scriptural reason for removal of an elder. Elders other than the Pastor may be removed from office by their own decision or by consensus decision of the other elders. Removal shall be based upon being spiritually unqualified, the inability to serve or as a result of the process laid out in Matthew 18:15-17 or failure to fulfill their commitments as an elder.

E. Vacancies

Elder vacancies can occur by death, resignation, or removal. When a vacancy occurs, the existing elders shall select an interim to fill the vacancy until the next election.

ARTICLE III. SUPPORT STAFF

The pastor and Board will employ and terminate other employees as necessary

ARTICLE IV. CORPORATE OFFICERS

SECTION 1. ADMINISTRATOR

The senior pastor shall serve as the overall administrator of the corporation. He will serve as moderator at church conferences and be responsible for ensuring that the daily business affairs of the church are appropriately and effectively executed.

SECTION 2. Board Members

A. Purpose and Function

Board Members shall sign the title to church property; all legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or rental of property; all notes and loan instruments; and such other legal documents as may require execution on behalf of the church. There shall be a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 8 Board Members. A minimum of 50% of the Board Members must be present for a vote to take place, majority of present Board Members can fulfill a vote. In the event of an emergency a Board member may submit an absentee ballot. A proxy vote will not be permitted.

B. Selection and Term of Office

Board Members will be nominated by the elders and voted on by the church. The Board Members will serve a maximum of two 3 year terms with 1 year off before returning.

SECTION 3. CLERK/SECRETARY

A. Purpose and Function

The Church Clerk shall serve as secretary of the corporation. The responsibilities of the clerk will be to keep the minutes of all church conferences and insure that a proper file of all members is maintained.

B. Selection and Term of Office

A volunteer may be appointed by the pastor, elders or board. A paid staff position can be filled by the board. The Church Secretary shall serve as Church Clerk. The Church Secretary shall serve a maximum term of two 3 year terms with 1 year off before returning.

SECTION 4. TREASURER

A. Purpose and Function

The Church Treasurer shall account for all monies coming into church and all monies going out of church. Treasurer shall provide to all members a full accounting in the form of accounting records, receipts and contracts.

B. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the church will be on a calendar year basis beginning on February 1 and ending on January 31 of each year.

C. Accounting Procedures

A system of accounting that will adequately provide for the handling of all funds shall be the responsibility of the Treasurer.

D. Budget

The Board, in consultation with the pastor and ministry team leaders, shall prepare and submit a budget for congregational approval prior to the beginning of each fiscal year.

E. Checks, Drafts, Etc.

All checks, drafts or orders for the payment of money, notes or other evidences of indebtedness issued in the name of the church shall be signed by at least two people who have been designated by the Board for that purpose. The pastor and or the pastor's spouse, an elder and or an elder's spouse or other relations of conflict of interest may not serve as check signers.

F. Deposits

All funds of the church shall be deposited in a timely manner to the credit of the church in such banks, trust companies or other depositories as determined by the Board.

G. Selection and Term of Office

A volunteer may be appointed by the pastor, elders or board. A paid staff position can be filled by the Board.

SECTION 5. VACANCIES

In the event a vacancy occurs in any corporate office, the Board may appoint a successor to fill the unexpired term.

SECTION 6. CHURCH CONFERENCES

A. Annual Church Conference

There shall be one (1) annual church conference called in March of each year to vote on the annual budget, elders and other major decisions.

B. Special Church Conferences

Any church conference other than the Annual Church conference must be called for a specific purpose. Church conferences may be called by the elders or by written petition of 25% of the active resident members presented to the elders, unless it is a conference to be called to vote on termination of the pastor; in this case refer to (Article II, Sec 1, C). An active resident member is one who has attended the church's regular worship services at least six (6) times in the Ninety (90) days preceding the circulation of the petition and is currently on the membership role.

C. Notices

Notices of the time and place of all church conferences shall be given no later than the Sunday prior to such meetings by publication in the church newsletter or worship bulletin, or by public announcement at a regular Sunday morning worship service.

D. Place of Church Conferences

All church conferences may be held on the premises of the church.

E. Quorum

25% of the active resident church members present at any duly called church conference shall constitute a quorum.

F. Proxies

Voting by proxy at any church conference shall not be allowed or recognized.

G. Will of the Church

All Ministry Teams, officers, and organizations of the church shall carry out the will of the church on any given matter, duly expressed by its vote.

H. Conduct of Church Business

All business of the church shall be conducted in a manner that honors Christ and respects others. The church shall strive to seek the will of God by prayerful deliberation and common consensus.

SECTION 7. CONTRACTS

The Board shall execute and deliver any contract or instrument in the name of the church which may be authorized by the church to be so executed and delivered. In this connection, the church body as a whole shall be the ultimate authority for all actions taken by the church and no other person, organization or corporate officer shall have any authority to contract or otherwise bind the church without express authorization from the church body.

SECTION 8. BOOKS AND RECORDS

The church shall keep and maintain a complete and accurate record of all financial accounts, membership lists, and church conference minutes at its principle office.

SECTION 9. JOB DESCRIPTIONS

The church shall keep and maintain job descriptions for all positions, whether volunteer or paid, at its principal office.