

Church Constitution

CONSTITUTION

of the

FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH SIDNEY, MT

Adopted by the membership on June 13, 2010

Revised by the membership on October 7 2012

Revised by the membership June 1 2014

Revised by the membership February 8 2015

Preamble

God, in his divine forbearance and his benevolent providence, saw fit to call together a group of Saints to be known as the Fellowship Baptist Church in 1980. The purpose of this body was, and remains, to glorify God through His worship, ordinances, preaching, fellowship, discipleship, discipline, and spreading of the Gospel.

As we have progressed in our task to glorify God and in our understanding of the Holy Scriptures under the guidance of His Spirit, we have decided to be bound in a Constitution that is both practical in design and Scriptural in its substance that we worship a God of order in an orderly fashion; one that is pleasing to the one who established the church, Jesus Christ.

We, as the membership of Fellowship Baptist Church, do hereby organize ourselves according to the guidelines and requirements set forth by all governing authorities, so long as they heretofore do not contradict our Christian conscience or the revealed will of God. This document submits to Christ Jesus as our head, founder and sustainer of this church, all rightful ruling authorities, the Baptist church covenant as adopted in 1980 at our church's founding, and the statement of faith of this body.

Article 1

Name

The name of this church is Fellowship Baptist Church.

Article 2

Purpose

This church exists to glorify God in all of its endeavors, as taken upon itself by the prescriptions of Scripture. This church glorifies God by loving Him and obeying His commands through: worshipping Him; equipping the saints through Bible instruction and study; proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching and personal evangelism and any other means consistent with the teachings of Holy Scripture; to engage in the discipline of its members in accord to godly behavior; encouraging, supporting, and participating in missions work, local, domestic, and global; administering the ordinances of baptism and communion; encouraging productive, edifying and healthy fellowship between members, serving other individuals, families, and churches by providing for physical, emotional and spiritual needs, in the name of Jesus Christ; and calling fellow churches to biblical faithfulness and purity through instruction and encouragement about the nature of the local church.

1 **Article 3**

2 **Membership**

3

4 **Section 1: Qualifications**

5 To qualify for membership in this church, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who provides evidence of regeneration in
6 keeping with a preliminary acknowledgment of their nature as a sinner, who has become regenerate, baptized by immersion,
7 and who wholeheartedly believes the Bible as inerrant. Each member must agree to submit to the teaching of scripture as
8 expressed in the Statement of Faith – which is the 2nd London Baptist Confession - and must promise to keep the
9 commitments expressed in the Church Covenant. The elders shall be responsible for determining each person’s qualification
10 for membership. In making this determination, they may rely on a person’s profession of faith, or such other evidence, as they
11 deem appropriate.

12

13 **Section 2: Admission of Members**

14 To be admitted into church membership, applicants shall be recommended by the elders for admission, advised by the church
15 council, and presented to the members at any regular or special meeting of the members, and shall at that point relinquish
16 their membership in other churches.

17

18 **Section 3: Duties and Privileges of Membership**

19 In accord with the duties enumerated in the Church Covenant, each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in
20 and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God’s leading and with the gifts, time, and material
21 resources each has received from God. Only members of this congregation shall be entitled to serve in the ministries of the
22 church; non-members may serve on an adhoc basis with the approval of the elders. Notwithstanding, non-members may serve
23 the church for purposes of administration and professional consultation. Under Christ this congregation is governed by its
24 members. Therefore, it is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend all members’ meetings and vote on the election
25 of officers, on decisions regarding membership status, and on such other matters as may be submitted to a vote.

26

27 **The church covenant shall be as follows:**

28

29 Having been led, as we believe by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and, on the profession of our
30 faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God,
31 and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

32

33 **FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF THIS CHURCH:**

34 We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this
35 church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality and to sustain its worship, ordinances,
36 discipline, and doctrines;

37

38 **AS CHRISTIAN STEWARDS:**

39 To contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the
40 spread of the gospel through all nations.

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43 **ALONE AND AT HOME:**

44 We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our
45 kindred and acquaintances;

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BEFORE THE WORLD:

To walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

TOWARD ONE ANOTHER:

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and Christian courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place - which shall be in good standing in fulfillment of this covenant - we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

Section 4: Associate Membership

Students and others temporarily residing in the Sidney area, who are already members of an evangelical church, may apply for associate membership. Qualifications are identical to those for full membership as set out above, except that home church membership must be retained. A letter of commendation will be sought from the applicant's home church.

Duties and privileges of associate members are the same as for other members except that:

(a) When absent from the Sidney area for extended periods of time, they are released from the responsibility to attend our church services;

(b) While they will be encouraged to participate in members' meetings they will not be eligible to stand for any office or to vote.

Termination of associate membership as a disciplinary measure will be as it is for other members, except that the elders shall notify the pastor or elders of the home church of that termination.

Associate membership will normally terminate immediately upon the ending of the period of temporary residence in the Sidney area.

Section 5: On Church Discipline

Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18: 15 and the example of scripture. Church discipline, then, should ordinarily be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed.

Elders may bring any level of church discipline against an individual they feel is necessary, prudent and beneficial to bring them to repentance; however, if the individual would like to seek appeal to the church membership as final authority, they may do so by asking the elders to call a congregational meeting to settle the matter of discipline, who are thereby bound by this Constitution to do so.

1 A congregational meeting to settle a matter of church discipline shall be held by the same procedure as for any other regular or
2 special business meeting. Church discipline can include admonition by the elders or congregation, suspension from
3 communion for a definite period, deposition from office, or disfellowship.

4
5 The purpose of such discipline should be for the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined;
6 for the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to others; For the purity of the church as a
7 whole; For the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians and Supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy
8 name.

9 10 **Section 6: Termination of Membership**

11 The church shall recognize the termination of a person's membership following his or her death, or may do so after he or she
12 has voluntarily resigned or joined with another church. Membership may also be terminated as an act of church discipline
13 (ordinarily, but not necessarily, at the recommendation of the elders) upon the vote of at least two thirds of the members
14 present at any regular or special meeting of the members.

15
16 The church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church,
17 either for the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline, or for any other biblical reason.

18
19 Members may be terminated, without a vote of the membership, only in the case of failure to attend Lord's Day worship (the
20 minimum for membership is heretofore and onward, fifty percent over 90 days unless they are providentially hindered and in
21 accordance to the method laid out in bylaws). In this case, the member will be notified of their deficiency after 60 days and
22 without response after 120 days, shall be dropped from membership by the church clerk, and the congregation will be notified
23 at the next scheduled business meeting.

24 25 **Article 4**

26 **Meetings**

27 28 **Section 1: Worship Meetings**

29 Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day, and may be held throughout the week as the church determines.

30 31 **Section 2: Members' Meetings**

32 In every meeting together, members shall act in that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is
33 appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

34
35 There shall be a regular members' meeting at least once a year. An elder designated by the elders shall preside as moderator
36 at all members' meetings of the church.

37
38 The elders shall see that the stated meetings of the church are annually held and that required reports are submitted to the
39 church by the responsible members.

40
41 Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those
42 members present. All votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast by members present. A budget shall be approved
43 by the membership at a members' meeting not more than three months after the start of the fiscal year. Prior to this approval
44 and subject to the elders' discretion, expenditures may continue at the prior year's level.

1 At any regular or special members' meeting, officers may be elected and positions filled as needed, so long as all relevant
2 constitutional requirements have been met. Special members' meetings may be called as required by the elders, or at the
3 written request, submitted to the elders, of thirty five percent of the voting membership. The date, time, and purpose of any
4 special meeting shall be announced at all public services of the church within two weeks preceding the meeting. In the event of
5 a written request from the members, the elders shall call a special meeting to be held within one month of their receipt of the
6 request.

8 **Article 5**

9 **Officers**

10 **Section 1: Summary**

11 The Biblical offices in the church are elders and deacons. In addition, our church recognizes the administrative positions under
12 this constitution of clerk and treasurer. All officers must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

14 **Section 2: Elders**

15 The elders shall be comprised of not less than two men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in I
16 Timothy 3: 17 and Titus 1: 6.

18 A majority of the active eldership cannot be composed of church members in the regular pay of the church, and no elder shall
19 hold the office of deacon during his tenure. Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall oversee the ministry and
20 resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in the Scripture, the elders shall devote their time to prayer,
21 the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine), and shepherding God's flock.

23 The church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on
24 elections. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as elders. An elder need not be re-
25 recognized once established in office.

27 Elders need only be elected into office once, to serve until dismissed by the elders, or until they resign from the position.

29 Sabbaticals of extended rest or disservice may be given through membership approval.

31 An elder's service may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that an elder
32 should be dismissed should express such concern to the elders and, if need be, to the congregation. Any such action shall be
33 done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18.

35 Any of the elders may be dismissed by a two thirds vote of the members at any members' meeting of the church.

37 The elders shall take particular responsibility to examine and instruct prospective members, examine and recommend all
38 prospective candidates for offices and positions, oversee the work of the deacons and appointed church agents and
39 committees, conduct worship services, administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, equip the membership for the
40 work of the ministry, encourage sound doctrine and practice, admonish and correct error, oversee the process of church
41 discipline, coordinate and promote the ministries of the church, and mobilize the church for world missions.

43 The elders are further to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share our
44 fundamental convictions. The elders may establish ministry positions or committees to assist them in fulfilling their

1 responsibilities. The elders may also propose funding for new paid staff positions. The membership shall approve all
2 candidates to fill the positions of senior and associate pastor.

3
4 The scope and approval of job descriptions for any staff position shall reside in the hands of those with hiring authority for
5 that position. The elders shall have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff members.
6 This responsibility may, on a case by case basis, be delegated to another staff member.

7
8 Each year the elders, after consultation with the church council shall present to the church an itemized budget. This budget
9 shall be presented for discussion at a specially called budget meeting.

10
11 No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the approval of the elders. The lead
12 pastor (the pastor primarily charged with preaching responsibilities) shall be the chairman of elders' meetings and the senior
13 pastor shall be the moderator at meetings. The elders shall also elect one of their numbers to serve as the president of the
14 corporation.

15 16 **Section 3: The Senior Pastor**

17 The senior pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section 2 above, and shall be
18 recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full time ministry of preaching and teaching.

19
20 His call shall not be subject to reaffirmation.

21
22 His call shall be defined as per Article 6, Section 3.

23
24 He shall preach on the Lord's Day, administer the ordinances of baptism and communion (or to delegate them to other elders)
25 and perform such other duties as usually pertain to that office, or as set forth in the constitution. In the absence or incapacity
26 of the senior pastor, the elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which can be delegated.

27 28 **Section 4: Associate Pastors**

29 The church may call additional pastors whose relationship to the senior pastor is that of associate. An associate pastor shall be
30 an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section 2, above, and shall be recognized by the church as
31 particularly gifted and called to the full time ministry of preaching and teaching.

32
33 His call shall be subject to triennial reaffirmation of the congregation, approved at a seventy-five percent vote.

34
35 His call shall be defined as per Article 6, Section 4.

36
37 He shall assist the senior pastor in the performance of his regular duties and shall perform any other duties as usually pertain
38 to the office of pastor, or as set forth in the constitution, or which may be specifically assigned to him by the congregation.

39
40 In the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor for defined periods of time (such as sabbatical or illness), the associate
41 pastor(s) shall assume the responsibility for his duties under the oversight of the elders.

42 43 **Section 5: Senior Pastoral Assistants**

1 The elders may hire additional staff to assist with pastoral ministry, designated as senior pastoral assistants. These shall not
2 be pastors, though they may be recognized as elders should they be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation,
3 in accordance with Article 5, Section 2.

4
5 The senior pastor shall define the responsibilities of the senior pastoral assistant(s). They shall serve at the will of the
6 Senior/lead pastor for an initial term up to two years, though that term may be extended with the approval of the elders.

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8 **Section 6: Deacons**

9 The office of deacon is described in I Timothy 3 Acts 6.

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11 The church shall recognize, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections, men who are giving of themselves in
12 service to the church, and who possess particular gifts of service. These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His
13 church and set apart as deacons. As with elders, deacons will not have terms, although they may enjoy the privilege of a
14 sabbatical for rest or disservice for a time to be determined by the elder body, with consultation with the deacon body.

15
16 Deacons shall care for the temporal needs of members, attend to the accommodations for public worship, and encourage and
17 support those able to help others and those with gifts of administration. The deacons shall receive, hold, and disburse a fund
18 for benevolence, reporting on its use to the elders at their request, and reporting to the church its total receipts and total
19 disbursements only.

20
21 The deacons with the agreement of the elders, may establish unpaid administrative positions or committees of members to
22 assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in the church.

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25 **Section 7: Church Council**

26 There shall be a board, henceforth referred to as a church council that shall consist of the Elder and Deacon Bodies and those
27 asked to serve by majority consensus by the existing church council and made eligible by criterion set by said council. The
28 term for church council shall be one year, renewable for indefinite terms. The elder body shall remove one from the council
29 after a completion of their term, should they not be fulfilling their service to the council or expectations set therein.

30
31 The church council shall vote on no matter, but shall serve by advising the elder body by consensus of the members and
32 performing functions set forth elsewhere in this constitution.

33
34 **Section 8: Clerk**

35 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
36 accurate roll of the membership, and to render reports as requested by the pastor, the elders, the deacons, or the church.

37
38 The clerk shall be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation to serve a term of one year.

39
40 In the absence or incapacity of the clerk, the elders shall appoint a member to perform the duties of the church clerk. The clerk
41 shall serve as secretary of the congregation. The church clerk shall ensure that dated copies of the most recent revision of this
42 constitution shall be available for all church members.

43
44 **Section 9: Treasurer**

1 The treasurer, who shall not be an active elder, deacon, or paid church staff member, shall ensure that all funds and securities
2 of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as appropriate. The treasurer shall also
3 be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues and expenses of the church at each members'
4 meeting. The responsibility may be delegated with the approval of the elders. The treasurer shall also ensure that full and
5 accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and adequate controls are
6 implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent
7 of the church. The treasurer shall render to the elders annually, or whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions
8 as treasurer and of the financial condition of the church. The treasurer shall be nominated by the elders and elected by the
9 congregation to serve a term of one year.

12 **Article 6: Elections**

14 **Section 1: Principles**

16 The process for church elections shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the following principles: Substantial prayer, both
17 individually and corporately, should be an integral part of the election process; Nominations should proceed with the support
18 of the elders; all candidates for church office should be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating
19 fellow members; the election process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration that is
20 appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 **Section 2: Selection of Officers**

23 The election of officers shall be held at a members' meeting of the church. Names of nominees to serve as elders, deacons,
24 clerk, or treasurer shall be presented by the elders at the previous members' meeting (providing that previous meeting
25 occurred at least eight weeks prior), and the election shall proceed as directed by the moderator. The elders should seek
26 recommendations and involvement from the general membership in the nomination process. Any member with reason to
27 believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the elders. Members intending
28 to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their objection to the elders as far in advance as possible before the
29 relevant church members' meeting.

31 The moderator shall declare elected to the office of elder all men receiving a 75% majority of all votes cast. For all other
32 offices, the moderator shall declare elected all persons receiving a simple majority of all votes cast; abstentions will not be
33 considered as votes cast.

35 The persons elected shall assume their respective offices upon election, unless another date has been specifically designated.

37 **Section 3: Calling of the Senior Pastor**

38 In the calling of any man to this position, the same basic process of calling an elder must be followed. In addition, however, the
39 church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential senior pastor and, before being asked
40 to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no
41 doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. Notice of the nomination of a man to be
42 elected to membership and called as senior pastor (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of his wife if he is
43 married) must be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a members' meeting.

1 **Section 4: Calling of Associate Pastor**

2 In the calling of any man to the position of associate pastor, the same basic process of calling an elder must be followed. In
3 addition, however, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential associate
4 pastor and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the elders that, having interviewed the
5 man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. Notice of
6 the nomination of a man to be called as associate pastor (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of him and
7 his wife if he is married) must be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a
8 members' meeting.

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10 **Section 5: Calling of Assistant Pastor**

11 The calling of any man to the position of assistant pastor requires that the man has been recognized and called by the
12 congregation to the office of elder, according to the process described in Article 6, Section 2. Such a man may then be called by
13 the elders to serve as assistant pastor with defined duties, for a fixed period of time, specified by the elders in the terms of his
14 call.

15
16 **Article 7: Indemnification**

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18 **Section 1: Legal Indemnification**

19 If a legal claim or criminal allegation is made against a person because he or she is or was an officer, employee, or agent of the
20 church, the church shall provide indemnification against liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim if the elders
21 determine that the person acted (a) in good faith (b) with the care an ordinarily prudent person in a similar position would
22 exercise under similar circumstances, and (c) in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the
23 church, and the person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful.

24
25 **Section 2: Permissive Indemnification**

26 At the discretion of the elders, the church also may indemnify any person who acted in good faith and reasonably believed that
27 his or her conduct was in the church's best interest and not unlawful.

28
29 **Section 3: Procedure**

30 If a quorum of the elders is not available for an indemnification determination, because of the number of elders seeking
31 indemnification, the requisite determination may be made by the membership or by special legal counsel appointed by the
32 membership.

33
34 **Article 8**

35 **Dispute Resolution**

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37 Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in
38 private or within the Christian Church, the church shall require its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to
39 biblically based principles, without reliance on the secular courts. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall
40 encourage the use of biblically based principles to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church, whether
41 Christian or pagan and whether individuals or corporate entities.

42
43 **Article 9**

1 **Amendments**

2
3 The Statement of Faith and Church Covenant may be amended by eighty five percent vote of the members present, voting at a
4 members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting, and shall
5 have been announced from the pulpit at church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote. This constitution may be
6 amended, so long as does not pertain to the Statement of Faith or Church Covenant, by a two-thirds vote of the members
7 present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous
8 members' meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at church services two successive Sundays prior to such
9 vote.

10
11 The revised version of this constitution shall be made available to all church members by the church clerk.

12
13 **Article 10**

14 **Bylaws**

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16 The church may enact bylaws for assistance in any matters deemed necessary to help the execution of this constitution, so
17 long as the bylaws do not contradict, negate or transcend the constitution.

18
19 Bylaws shall be written by the elder body and approved under the advisement of the church council. They, then, shall be
20 recommended by the church council to the church body at the next scheduled business meeting.

21
22 Bylaws, unlike amendments to this constitution, do not require advanced notice before voting may take place. They are
23 approved by a fifty percent vote and may be repealed by two-thirds. Bylaws shall be kept in a binder in the church office, and
24 made available to members by the church clerk.