

Christ Chapel of Bandera, Bandera, Texas

By-Laws

Preamble

We, the members of Christ Chapel of Bandera, believe that the Bible is the infallible and inerrant Word of God. The Bible is unique among all the writings of the world because it is inspired (literally, "God-breathed") by God Himself and is therefore revered as holy and superior to human insight, knowledge, and wisdom. The Bible is the only basis and ultimate standard for our beliefs and practice. We believe that God's Word is reliable, true and eternal. The eternal truth of the Bible is not to be diluted with personal opinion or altered by the ever-changing traditions of humanity. The Bible is the living, powerful, and active sword of the Spirit revealing God's redemptive plan for humanity.¹

Believing that, in the Bible, God has revealed His plan for the governance of the tangible expression of the Church as local fellowships on this earth, we willingly and joyfully adopt these By-Laws as a serious and thoughtful attempt to capture the clearest teaching of scripture concerning church polity.

Article I - Membership

Christ Chapel of Bandera is committed to reflecting the primary characteristics of the first century church² as described in the New Testament within our contemporary context. These primary characteristics include: members were baptized disciples of Jesus, confessing that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God; their affection was on things that would matter after death; they were committed to gathering often for corporate worship and prayer, studying the Bible, observing communion, making disciples, fellowship, and breaking bread; they enjoyed a strong bond of unity; their compassion for each other was put into action by personal sacrifice; they met together frequently for mutual encouragement; and they exhibited a consistent and exuberant praise to God. The Church that is being built by Christ Himself into a spiritual household is a living spiritual organism (the Body of Christ) rather than just an organization.³

We receive members in one of two ways:

1. Professing Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God and being baptized.
2. Statement of faith in Jesus Christ and prior believer's baptism.

Before joining Christ Chapel of Bandera, candidates for membership must meet with the pastor for new member orientation. This orientation meeting creates an opportunity for the pastor to

¹ Deuteronomy 4.2; 12.32; 1 Kings 8.56; Psalms 19.7-10; 93.10; 111.7-10; 119.89-106, 160; Proverbs 3.1-8; 30.5-6; Isaiah 40.8; Matthew 5.17-18; Luke 21.33; John 17.17; Ephesians 6.17; 1 Thessalonians 2.13; 2 Timothy 3.16-17; Hebrews 4.12; 1 Peter 1.22-25; 2 Peter 1.19-21; Revelation 22.18-21

² From the Greek "ekklasia" which literally means "the called out ones"

³ Matthew 16.13-19; Acts 2.37-47; 4.32-37; Romans 12.1-21; 1 Corinthians 3.16-17; 12.1-31; Ephesians 1.3-6; 2.1-22; 4.1 - 5.33; Colossians 1.15-20; Titus 2.1-15; Hebrews 10.19-39; 1 Peter 2.1-10; Jude 17-23

know each candidate personally and to hear their testimony. This meeting also creates an opportunity for new member candidates to become familiar with the Statement of Beliefs and polity of the church. It is important for the church and the candidates that new members know, and are in agreement with, the core beliefs of Christ Chapel of Bandera prior to joining the fellowship.

Except in extenuating circumstances considered on an individual basis by the pastor, a member will be considered to have voluntarily terminated his/her membership in Christ Chapel as follows:

1. Upon the death of the member.
2. Upon request to the pastor, either verbally or in writing, that membership be terminated.
3. Upon knowledge and confirmation by the pastor that the member has physically moved their permanent residence from the area.
4. Upon knowledge and confirmation by the pastor that the member has not attended the regular Sunday services of Christ Chapel for at least six months, and has joined, or is regularly attending, another church.
5. Upon knowledge and confirmation by the pastor that the member has not attended the regular Sunday services of Christ Chapel for at least one year.

Membership in Christ Chapel may be involuntarily terminated only upon recommendation of the pastor and/or elders, and consent of the congregation by at least 2/3 majority vote in regular church conference.

Article II - Authority

Jesus, who is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, is the supreme authority and head of Christ Chapel of Bandera.⁴

Christ Chapel of Bandera is an autonomous fellowship; not affiliated with or subordinate to any denominational organization or authority. We do, however, recognize that our fellowship is only one of many members of the larger body of Christ and therefore desire to cooperate with other Christian fellowships and organizations of sound doctrine and practice that are committed to the glory of God and the advancement of His Kingdom.

Article III - Offices

God gives leaders to the church for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry. God's plan for the church is that every member be actively engaged in the work of the ministry, using their God given spiritual gifts, talents and resources for the glory of God and the edification of the Body of Christ. While every member is equally vital to the life and health of the fellowship, some members are set apart to perform unique functions within the church.⁵

⁴ Ephesians 1.20-23; 4.15-16; 5.23-24; Colossians 1.15-20; 2.8-10

⁵ Romans 12.1-21; 1 Corinthians 12.1-31; Ephesians 4.11-16

Pastor

The pastor is called as a servant-leader and shepherd of the local congregation, with responsibility for the welfare and oversight of the church. Utilizing his spiritual gifting, the pastor ministers to the fellowship by leading in worship, prayer, preaching and teaching, evangelism and missions, care and comfort of the sick, needy and grieving. Among other duties performed as part of his ministry to the fellowship, the pastor administers the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, and presides at all meetings of the church in conference. The pastor shall employ, supervise and manage all employees necessary to carry out the mission of the church as provided in the annual budget and consistent with other provisions of these by-laws.

The pastor shall be chosen and called by the church when a vacancy occurs. Each voting member present at a regular church conference shall nominate five (5) members to serve on a pastor search committee. The seven (7) names receiving the most nominations (top five for committee members, plus two alternates) shall compose the committee. The committee shall seek the advice and consent of the church administrative council concerning financial compensation for a prospective pastor. Upon recommendation of the search committee, the church may extend a call to the candidate to become pastor by a 4/5 majority of those active members present and voting at a church conference called for such purpose. The ballot must include an itemization of all annual compensation, allowances and benefits to be paid by the church. The call shall be for an indefinite period and may be terminated at any time by voluntary resignation of the pastor, mutual agreement between the pastor and church, or by dismissal of the pastor as the result of a vote of the church in a conference called for such purpose.

Elders

The elders assist the pastor in the work of the ministry and are entrusted to govern and guard the church through servant leadership and teaching in submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. The elders are responsible to oversee and shepherd the flock, preach with sound doctrine and refute those who contradict it, lead through example, teach and exhort, and pray for the sick. The elders are to prayerfully seek the Lord's leading for the direction of the church, effectively communicate the vision of the church to its members, oversee the total ministry of the church, ordain deacons, and exercise church discipline when necessary. The elders shall handle and consider suggestions, recommendations, and grievances from, or on behalf of, any member or organization affiliated with the church.

The Bible is very clear concerning the qualifications of elders and it is essential that the Lord's instruction be honored in the selection, appointment, confirmation, and ordination of each elder. The two following passages provide guidance⁶:

- (The apostle Paul writing to Titus) I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders⁷ in every town, as I directed you: someone who is blameless, the husband of one wife, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious. For an overseer⁸, as God's

⁶ Other important passages concerning elders and overseers: Acts 14.23; 20.28-32; Philippians 1.1;

1 Timothy 5.17-22; 6.11-16; 2 Timothy 2.1 - 4.5; Hebrews 13.17; James 5.13-20; 1 Peter 5.1-11

⁷ From the Greek "presbeuteros" translated in English as "elder"

⁸ From the Greek "episkopos" translated in English as "overseer" or "bishop"

steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.⁹ **Titus 1.5-9**

- The saying is trustworthy: whoever aspires to the office of overseer desires a noble task. Now an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way - for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace and the snare of the devil. **1 Timothy 3.1-7**

Elders are recommended to this office by the pastor, subject to confirmation of the church. No one shall be recommended as an elder who has not been a member of Christ Chapel of Bandera for at least one year. Elder appointments are for life as long as the elder is an active member of Christ Chapel of Bandera and continues to meet the qualifications for this office as described in scripture.

Deacons

Elders and deacons are distinct Biblical offices with separate, but complementary functions. Deacons play a vital role by leading service ministries and providing temporal care to the members of the fellowship. A deacon is literally a servant who leads the church by doing the innumerable things that need to be done, and by managing the many faithful people in the church who also serve. Because of the faithful and capable service of deacons, the elders are free to devote their time to prayer, seeking the Lord's guidance for the church, and serving the Word of God. Deacons shall have the authority and responsibility to carry out the ministry tasks assigned to them by the pastor and/or elders.

The Bible is very clear concerning the qualifications of deacons and it is essential that the Lord's instruction be honored in the recommendation, examination, confirmation, and ordination of each deacon. The following passage provides guidance¹⁰:

- Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money; they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them first be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve as deacons. Women likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, and let them manage their children and their households well; for those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. **1 Timothy 3.8-13**

⁹ Elder and overseer / bishop refer to the same office as evidenced in Titus 1.5-9

¹⁰ Other important passages concerning deacons: Acts 6.1-7, Romans 16.1-2

As ministry needs arise, the pastor shall seek deacon candidate recommendations from the congregation. Deacon candidates will be examined by the pastor to verify that they meet the qualifications for this important office as set forth in the Bible and that the Holy Spirit has gifted them to provide servant leadership for the assigned ministry area. After examination, the qualified deacon candidate(s) will be presented to the congregation for confirmation and ordination to the deacon ministry. Deacon appointments are for life as long as the deacon is an active member of Christ Chapel of Bandera and continues to meet the qualifications for this office as described in scripture. A deacon may be assigned or reassigned to serve in other ministry areas of the church at the request of the deacon or the discretion of the pastor.

Article IV - Administration

The church shall establish an administrative council to serve the church and assist the pastor and elders in accomplishing the various necessary administrative and corporate aspects of Christ Chapel of Bandera. In this capacity, they shall recommend individuals from the membership to serve as officers and trustees of the 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. The council shall have responsibility to carry out all church financial operations and transactions, except that they shall not encumber the church with loan, transfer, sale or purchase of any real estate except by authorization conveyed by the church. They shall develop, recommend and monitor the annual budget, ensure that accurate and complete financial records are maintained, make periodic financial reports available to the membership, develop and manage staff personnel policies, and provide for the care, protection and maintenance of all church property.

The administrative council shall consist of five (5) members nominated by the pastor and confirmed by the church to serve for two-year terms, except that two members of the initial council shall serve for a one-year term. The pastor, or his designee, shall also serve as an ex-officio member of the council and shall appoint new members for the unexpired term of any member who is unable to serve their entire term.

Article V - Procedure for Church Conference

1. The church shall meet in conference as may be required, but no less than annually. A conference may be called in accordance with provisions of this article by the pastor, or upon request to the pastor from the elders, deacons, or administrative council. The pastor or his designee shall preside at all meetings.
2. Church conferences must be held on a Sunday or Wednesday.
3. Pulpit announcements concerning the reason, date, and time of the meeting must be given at least two Sundays prior to the conference.
4. Business to be considered at the conference must be available to the church membership in writing for at least ten days prior to the meeting.
5. All active members who have attained the age of eighteen years shall have the right to vote. Active members, for voting purposes, are defined as those members who regularly attend Sunday worship (at least 75% attendance over the last 3 months). Extenuating circumstances affecting attendance will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Article VI – Actions Requiring Church Confirmation

Actions subject to confirmation by the church in conference require a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote, cast by secret ballot, of the qualified active members present at the meeting, except that a vote to extend the call to a pastor shall require a four-fifths (4/5) majority vote.

The following actions shall require confirmation of the church in conference:

- Calling or dismissal of a minister or worship leader
- Creation or deletion of any church committee or church staff position
- Ordination of elders and deacons
- Changes to the Statement of Beliefs
- Amending the By-Laws
- New building programs
- Purchase or sale of property
- Adoption of the annual church budget
- Appointment of corporate officers and trustees
- Involuntary termination of membership

The pastor, elders, deacons, or administrative council may, at their discretion, seek confirmation from the church concerning other major decisions not listed above.

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