

ADBC Constitution and By-Laws

AUDUBON DRIVE BIBLE CHURCH

A Reformed and Evangelical Congregation

THE NATURE OF OUR CONSTITUTION AS A CHURCH

We believe that the gates of hell will not prevail against the church (Matt. 16:18). We believe in the communion of saints and the universal Christian church.¹ We believe in the invisible universal Christian church which “consists of the whole number of the elect, who have been, who are being, or who yet shall be gathered into one under Christ who is the church’s Head. The church is the wife, the body, the fullness of Christ, who ‘fills all in all’ (Ephesians 1:10, 22, 23; 5:23, 27, 32; Colossians 1:18; Hebrews 12:23).”² We believe in the universal visible Christian church, which includes all who profess faith in the only Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, and is not bound by nationality, language, ethnicity, age, or denomination. We believe in the local church and that each individual in the universal visible Christian church should be relationally, spiritually, and legally-connected to a biblically-ordered local congregation.³ Audubon Drive Bible Church (hereafter, ADBC) is thus, by the grace of God, striving to be a biblically-ordered congregation.

1 MEMBERSHIP

1.1 THE NATURE OF MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1.1 Membership at ADBC shall be open to all those who have a credible profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 1.1.2 Biblically, membership in a local church consists of a three-fold responsibility: of members to one another (Romans 12:10), of the leadership to the members (1 Peter 5:1-4), and of members to their leaders (Hebrews 13:17).
- 1.1.3 To be a member of ADBC, one must profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized. Acknowledging differences within the historic Evangelical Church, ADBC welcomes all professing believers into membership who have a credible profession of faith and have been baptized within a Protestant Evangelical Church. Nevertheless, ADBC practices only the baptism of professing believers/confessors/disciples by immersion, and in the name of the Triune God.

¹From *The Apostle’s and Nicene Creeds, 2nd – 6th Centuries A.D.*

²From *The 2nd London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689, 26:1.*

³The New Testament gives clear commands and precedents to support this contention. By “relationally,” it is meant that members of churches should have spiritually vital relationships with others in the local church. By “legally,” it is meant that one should complete certain orderly procedures to be accounted as “a member” of the church.

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1.1.4 Members of this congregation are called to exercise their spiritual gift(s) (1 Peter 4:7-11) and join with us in the use of the ordinary means of grace: the study of God's Word, prayer, fellowship, evangelism, and the sacraments of the New Covenant (baptism and the Lord's Supper). Thus, it is the responsibility of members to assemble with the congregation at the stated meetings of the church (unless providentially hindered [Hebrews 10:23-27]).

1.2 THE PROCESS OF BECOMING A MEMBER

1.2.1 Believers (John 1:12; Acts 2:41) may become members of ADBC, first, by request. Second, by consultation with the elder(s) through our "Membership-Matters Class." Third, by completing our "Membership-Matters Class" (which includes: studying and embracing ADBC's *Constitution and By-Laws*, the documents on our church website [www.audubonchurch.org] in the "Our Beliefs" section and those on our ecclesiastical association website [www.firefellowship.org] in both the "Beliefs" and "Position Statements" sections, as well as any or all other materials deemed appropriate by the elders). After completing the above requirements, applicants will be officially admitted to membership by presenting themselves at a designated worship service, at which time, they shall publicly take membership vows, be received by a standing affirmation vote of our membership, and be given the right hand of Christian fellowship (Galatians 2:9).

1.2.2 Believers may also become members by making a public profession of faith in believer's/confessor's/disciple's baptism (by immersion), after which case the baptismal candidate will be enrolled into our next "Membership-Matters Class."

1.3 THE CHILDREN OF CHURCH MEMBERS

1.3.1 The children of church members, under sixteen (16) years old, who profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ may become members of the church through the same process outlined above (1.2.1).

1.3.2 Children who are not "communicant" church members and wish to make a public profession of faith and take The Lord's Supper should: (a) profess their faith to their parents at home (who should examine the credibility of their profession), (b) profess their faith to the pastor(s)/elders, and (c) publicly declare their allegiance to Christ at a stated meeting of the church (through either baptism [by immersion], or by giving their salvation testimony).⁴

1.4 CHURCH MEMBERSHIP AGREEMENT (In Conclusion)

⁴By not "communicant," it is meant that these individuals are not permitted to take Communion as a believer.

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1.4.1 The membership of ADBC shall be composed of individuals who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and affirm the tenets of this *Constitution and By-Laws*, and who offer evidence, by their confession and their conduct, that they are living in accordance with their affirmations and this *Constitution and By-Laws*, and are actively pursuing and continuing in a vital fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ. The elders of ADBC shall have final authority in all matters of church governance, as set forth and described in this *Constitution and By-Laws*.

VOTING PRIVILEGES

1.5.1 Voting privileges are restricted to members in good standing who have passed their sixteenth (16th) birthday.

DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS

1.6.1 Members of this church who shall err in doctrine or conduct shall be subject to discipline according to Matthew 18:15-20. Namely, such discipline involves the following steps (if the erring member does not repent): (a) individual admonition, (if no repentance) (b) rebuke by two or three (generally accompanied by an elder), (if no repentance) (c) public/congregational reproof and/or suspension from the Lord's Table, and (if no repentance) (d) excommunication [i.e. ex-communicating].

1.6.2 It shall be the responsibility of any member of this church who has knowledge of the erring member's misconduct to warn and to correct and, if necessary, to take one or two other members with him to lovingly warn the erring brother or sister. If the erring member does not heed this warning, after private and congregational reproof, it shall be incumbent upon the church, under the direction of the elders, to put the erring member out of the church by means of a two-thirds majority congregational vote (2 Corinthians 2:6). Such discipline is for the purpose of gaining the sincere repentance of erring believers in accordance with God's Word (1 Corinthians 5:5).

CHANGE OF MEMBERSHIP STATUS

1.7.1 Members of ADBC who wish to join another church for reasons of circumstance, change of location, or issues of conscience may voluntarily remove themselves from the fellowship and oversight of this congregation and its leaders by consultation with the pastor(s)/elders and by writing a letter of resignation. The elders reserve the right to reject any resignation letter deemed biblically-dishonoring to our Lord Jesus Christ.

1.7.2 Letters to other churches shall be granted upon request. All such requests shall be presented to the body of elders.

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1.7.3 Members of this church who shall willfully, without plausible reason or excuse, and consistently absent themselves from the services of the church shall be subject to the steps of church discipline (1.6).

2 LEADERSHIP

2.1 ELDERS (RULING ELDERS)

2.1.1 ELECTION AND TERM OF OFFICE

2.1.1.1 The governing body of this church shall be known as the elder board. Pastors function within this board with the same authority as a ruling elder (see “Pastors” [2.2]). All members of this board shall be elected by a super-majority vote of three-fourths of the members at a duly called business meeting. All pastors, officers, boards, committees, and staff shall be responsible to the elders.

2.1.1.2 Any member of the church, at any time, may nominate a man to the office of elder. The nomination must be submitted in writing to the elder board. After satisfactorily determining the man's spiritual qualifications to serve, the elders will place his name before the congregation. After the congregational review of the nominee, the elders will recommend the nominee to the congregation and seek the will and affirmation of the congregation via a ballot vote. Therefore, there are six basic steps in the recognition of a leader: (a) Nomination, (b) Elder Examination, (c) Congregational Review, (d) Recommendation, (e) Election, and (f) Installation.

2.1.2 GOVERNMENT

2.1.2.1 The government of this church is representative, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in accordance with the Word of God, and is vested in the elders, as elected by the church members. The authority of the elders (including the pastor[s]) is limited to that specified by the *By-Laws* or by resolution of the members at a duly called business meeting. Any authority not so granted is specifically reserved in the members.

2.1.3 QUALIFICATIONS

2.1.3.1 All members of the body of elders must be active members of this church and possess the qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

2.1.4 DUTIES

2.1.4.1 It shall be the duty of the elders, along with the Preaching Pastor (and the other pastors), to have the general oversight over the spiritual life of the church.

2.1.4.1.1 To discipline the church in accordance with God's Word.

2.1.4.1.2 To assist the Preaching Pastor, and any other pastor(s), in the administration of all worship services and ordinances.

2.1.4.1.3 To cooperate with the Preaching Pastor in the shepherding of the membership of this church; seeking to bring every believer into spiritual maturity; reconcile, so far

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as possible all differences; give counsel and comfort to the poor, the sick and the afflicted; keep order in the assemblies of members; supervise and administer church and missionary activities.

2.1.4.1.4 To approve all literature, publications, sermons, and tracts distributed by or in the name of this church.

2.1.4.1.5 To bear and consider all reports and programs submitted by pastors, boards, committees, and staff.

2.1.4.1.6 To supervise and administer all ways and means of raising funds in accordance with these *By-Laws* or as directed by the members; to hire and discharge personnel; to determine salaries and missionary allowances; to buy/hold title to property, in trust for the use and benefit of the members, but shall not acquire or dispose of real property or its fixtures or contract any loans on behalf of this church except upon prior specific instruction and authority by the members at a duly called business meeting; to take all necessary measures for the protection, management and upkeep of all property; to determine the use of the facilities of this church for all purposes; to render a written financial report to the members at the annual business meeting of the members, outlining therein the activities of the elders for the past year and recommendations, if any, for the members; to execute any special instrument of the members adopted in a resolution at a duly called meeting of the members.

2.1.4.1.7 To examine all candidates for the offices of elder or deacon in accordance with 1 Timothy 3:1-13, in order to help both candidate and church ascertain if such men nominated do indeed meet the needed scriptural qualifications for the offices of elder and deacon.

2.1.5 OFFICERS OF THE ELDER BOARD

2.1.5.1 The officers (such as chairman, secretary, treasurer, etc.) and specific responsibilities of members of the elder board shall be determined by unanimous consent of the elders in the course of regular meetings and as official delegation and correspondence require.

2.1.5.2 The elders may elect from the members, assistant secretaries and assistant treasurers, who need not be elders.

2.1.6 TERMINATING AN ELDER'S SERVICE

2.1.6.1 An elder may be recommended to the members for dismissal by a unanimous vote of the elders. Voting shall be in a duly called meeting of the elders. At least thirty days prior to such meeting, the elder under consideration shall be notified in writing of the reason(s) for recommended dismissal, and at his choice may be represented by two members, introduce evidence, present and cross examine witnesses. If the vote is for dismissal, recommendation shall be made by the elders to the membership and the services of the elder may be terminated then by at least a super-majority vote of three-fourths of the members at a duly called business meeting.

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The membership may require the elder body to investigate an elder's life in the manner prescribed herein these *By-Laws*, by a written notice of just cause for such an examination addressed to the elder body and signed by two or more of the active members of this church (see 1 Timothy 5:19-20).

2.1.6.2 Should an elder wish to terminate his tenure in office, he shall inform the elders, in writing, of his intention at least thirty days before the intended date of termination. The office of elder shall be considered vacant in the event of any one of the following: death, resignation, refusal to serve, absence from three consecutive meetings of the elders without excuse satisfactory to the elders.

2.1.7 REGULAR MEETING

2.1.7.1 A regular meeting of the elders shall be held not less than thirty days after the annual meeting of members for the purpose of electing officers. Other regular meetings shall be held at such times as the elders may determine but at least once a month. The time and date of such meetings will be announced to the members.

2.1.8 SPECIAL MEETINGS

2.1.8.1 A special meeting of the elders may be called at any time at the request of the Preaching Pastor, the other pastor(s), the chairman of the elders, or by at least two ruling elders.

2.1.9 QUORUM AND VOTING

2.1.9.1 A quorum shall be a simple majority of the elders. While unanimous consent for the sake of unity is the goal of the elder board, the elders may choose to operate among themselves by consensus, but they must have at least a super-majority vote of three-fourths in order to proceed with an action.

2.2 PASTORS (PREACHING PASTOR AND OTHER STAFF PASTORS)

2.2.1 OFFICE

2.2.2 Pastors fill an office which is scripturally identical with the office of elder or overseer. However, usually one man is considered “the pastor,” “the teaching pastor,” “the senior pastor,” “the pastor-teacher,” or “the preaching pastor” (Ephesians 4:11-13) who fills the priority role of the regular/weekly/public preaching of the Word of God. The title of “pastor” is recognized in our church to specify a person who has been internally-called by God to devote himself to the work of the ministry and has been recognized by the elders and the congregation to serve in this capacity. Pastors and elders do the same work in shepherding the flock. The differences regard personal calling, labor in ministry, and remuneration. It is the goal of ADBC to always support at least one pastor in full time ministry that he may devote himself to the work of preaching and teaching the Word of God (1 Timothy 5:17).

2.2.3 DUTIES

2.2.3.1 These duties are inclusive of all elders given the title, “pastor,” and

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especially apply to “the preaching pastor.”

2.2.3.1.1 The pastor(s) shall have general oversight of the spiritual life of the church along with the ruling elders; communicate the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; teach the Word; train believers to do the work of the ministry; administer the sacraments of the church; have charge of the worship services; and shall be ex-officio members with voting privileges of all groups or committees appointed by the elders.

2.2.3.1.2 The pastor(s) and ruling elders shall guard the purity of doctrine and life of the church.

2.2.3.1.3 The pastor(s) and ruling elders shall warn the church in accordance with God's Word.

2.2.3.1.4 The pastor(s) will only perform and/or participate in weddings that comply with the documents on our church website (www.audubonchurch.org) in the “Our Beliefs” section, and on our ecclesiastical association website (www.firefellowship.org) in both the “Beliefs” and “Position Statements” sections, and also, only those which comply with our “Marriage Policy Statement” (4.1.1) and our “Building And Property Usage Policy” (5.1.1).

2.2.4 CALL

2.2.4.1 A candidate for pastor shall be considered only after he has subscribed in writing to the doctrinal teachings and *By-Laws* of this church. He shall be recommended to the members by a unanimous vote of the elders and called to serve by at least a super-majority vote of three-fourths of the members at a duly called business meeting.

2.2.5 TERMINATING A PASTOR'S SERVICE

2.2.5.1 A pastor may be recommended for dismissal by an affirmative vote of the elders. Voting shall be in a duly called meeting of the elders. At least thirty days prior to the meeting, the pastor under consideration shall be notified in writing of the reason(s) for the recommended dismissal, and at his examination may be represented by two members, introduce evidence, and present and cross-examine witnesses. If the vote is for dismissal, recommendation shall be made by the elders to the membership and the services of the pastor may be terminated then by at least a super-majority vote of three-fourths of the members at a duly called business meeting.

2.2.5.2 Should the pastor wish to terminate his tenure in office, he shall inform the elders in writing of his intention at least thirty days before the intended date of termination.

2.3 DEACONS

2.3.1 ELECTION

2.3.2 Deacons shall be elected for the purpose of carrying out needful administrative and cultural functions under the direction of the elders. Deacons shall be elected in the

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same manner as elders (2.1.1.2).

2.3.3 TERMINATING A DEACON'S SERVICE

2.3.3.1 Terminating a deacon's service shall be done in the same manner as that of an elder (2.1.6)

2.3.4 QUALIFICATIONS

2.3.4.1 All deacons must be active members of this church and possess the qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:8-12 and Acts 6:1-6.

2.3.5 DUTIES

2.3.5.1 Under the authority of the elder board, the deacons shall perform the following duties: formulate and administrate the financial budget of the church; maintain the physical plant; oversee the mercy ministries of the church.

3 WORSHIP

3.1 WORSHIP MEETINGS

3.1.1 STATED MEETINGS

3.1.1.1 Public worship services shall be held as often as the pastor(s)/elders may determine, but the regular schedule of meetings shall always include Lord's Day (Sunday) services for teaching, preaching, praise, and prayer, the monthly celebration of the Lord's Supper, and baptismal services as often as needed. Other ministries shall be scheduled according to the needs of the congregation in accordance with God's Word, including Wednesday evening ministries; small group studies for fellowship and spiritual growth (usually in homes); biblical and theological classes for further ministry training; special conferences and seminars; fellowship activities; and outreach ministries.

3.1.2 BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

3.1.2.1 Baptism is a blessed sacrament of the New Covenant instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism by immersion in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit admits a person into the visible church, testifies of identification with the Triune God of Scripture, union with Christ, regeneration, forgiveness of sin, consecration to walk in newness of life, and fellowship in the Body of Christ (Matthew 3:13-17; 28:19-20; Mark 1:4; John 1:12; Acts 2:41; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:11-12; Titus 3:5).

3.1.2.2 Baptismal candidates at ADBC shall be examined by the pastor(s)/elders and testify of their faith publicly during the baptismal service.

3.1.2.3 The Lord's Supper (Communion) is a blessed sacrament of the New Covenant instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ. By eating the bread and drinking the cup in a worthy manner, believers spiritually feed upon Christ, renew their union and communion with Him, meditate upon His redemptive work, and renew their

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thankfulness for His saving work, as well as spiritually commune with other believers (Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 10:14-21; 11:23-26).

- 3.1.2.4 The Lord's Supper or Table is not the table of ADBC; it is the *Lord's Table*, hence ADBC practices "open Communion" as defined in the following way: Any baptized believer (John 1:12; Acts 2:41; not censured under church discipline) may partake of the Lord's Supper on the basis of his or her self-examination. Therefore, in the church, all are permitted to come to the Table who credibly profess faith in Christ and who have been baptized.⁵
- 3.1.2.5 Although baptism is a requirement for the proper partaking of The Lord's Supper, certain baptism at ADBC, or in the exact way practiced by ADBC is not required. Acknowledging the historical differences of Protestants on baptism, ADBC accepts into membership and to fellowship in The Lord's Supper, believers who have been baptized from all Protestant traditions.
- 3.1.2.6 Therefore, all church members (not censured under church discipline) are called to The Lord's Supper after self-examination. Professing believers visiting ADBC are likewise permitted to the Table on the basis of their self-examination. In the case of the children of church members (who are not yet members), public profession of faith is necessary in baptism, or as a salvation testimony at a stated meeting of the church in order to properly approach the Table.

3.2 MEMBER'S MEETINGS

3.2.1 PLACE

- 3.2.1.1 All meetings of the members shall be held at the principal place of worship of this church unless otherwise specified through normal channels of communication.

3.2.2 SEMI-ANNUAL MEMBER'S MEETINGS

- 3.2.2.1 There shall be as many member's meetings per year as necessary for the

⁵Baptism is the New Covenant sacrament of entrance into Christ's church and The Lord's Supper is the New Covenant sacrament of continuation in the church. Theologically, the reason that baptism is a requirement for The Lord's Supper is because one who has not undergone the entrance rite of the "visible" church cannot properly receive the ongoing communion/fellowship rite of the "visible" church (Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 12:13). If a person wishes to take the Lord's Supper and has never been baptized and does not consent to be baptized, how can that person's profession of faith of Christ as their Lord be credible, since Christ Himself was baptized (Matthew 3:13-17) and commanded baptism (Matthew 28:18-20)? Biblically, the requirement of baptism has typological precedents in Passover (i.e., only the circumcised could eat). Historically, in Acts 2:41-42, it was believers who were baptized and who "broke bread together." Exegetically, in 1 Corinthians 11, the Lord's Supper takes place when "you come together as a church" which presupposed their baptism (1 Corinthians 11:18; see also Acts 18:8; 1 Corinthians 1:13; 12:13).

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responsible communication with and responsible oversight of this congregation. However, there shall always be at least one each year, an annual business meeting, of the members within six weeks after the end of the fiscal year; the exact date(s) or time(s) of these meetings will be determined by the elders. The annual business meeting shall involve any matters deemed necessary by the elder board, but shall at least include a report of the past year's financial standing and expenditures and a proposed budget for the coming year to be affirmed by the congregation.

3.2.3 SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETINGS

3.2.3.1 Special business meetings of the members shall be called by the pastor(s)/elders or upon written request of one-fourth of the voting members. Announcement of a special meeting must be given through normal channels of communication at least seven days before the scheduled meeting. These announcements must state the purpose, time, and place of the meeting.

3.2.4 FINANCIAL REPORTS

3.2.4.1 Financial reports shall be made available by the deacons. Members may request financial expenditure information at any time, however, specific donation information will not be revealed except with the permission of the giver.

3.2.5 QUORUM AND CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

3.2.5.1 Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by a simple majority of voting members present. The majority vote of such members present and voting shall prevail unless the vote of a greater number is required by law or by these *By-Laws*. Abstentions will not be considered as votes cast.

3.2.5.2 In all business meetings, an elder shall preside, or a chairman shall be appointed by the elders.

3.2.5.3 In the transaction of business, the latest revised edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* shall be used in all cases not covered by these *By-Laws*.

3.3 AMENDMENTS TO THE BY-LAWS

3.3.1 REVISIONS AND AMENDMENTS

3.3.1.1 This *Constitution and By-Laws* may be amended or revised by a super-majority ballot vote of three-fourths of members at any special business meeting duly called for such action, provided that a copy of such proposed amendments and/or revisions has been directed to each active member at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

4 WEDDINGS

4.1 MARRIAGE POLICY STATEMENT

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4.1.1 Because God has ordained marriage and defined it as the covenant relationship between a man, a woman, and Himself (Malachi 2:14-16); ADBC will only recognize marriages between a biological man and a biological woman. Further, the pastor(s) of ADBC shall only participate in weddings and solemnize marriages between one man and one woman.

4.2 WEDDINGS HELD AT ADBC

4.2.1 Only Weddings that comply with our “Marriage Policy Statement” (4.1.1) and our “Building and Property Usage Policy” (5.1.1) will be held in the facilities and/or on the grounds of ADBC.

4.2.2 Any activities accompanying weddings such as showers, rehearsals, and receptions, must also comply with our “Marriage Policy Statement” (4.1.1) and our “Building and Property Usage Policy Statement” (5).

5 BUILDING AND PROPERTY USAGE POLICY STATEMENT

5.1 ADBC FACILITIES AND GROUNDS

5.1.1 Our facilities and grounds may only be used by those who are in agreement with all of the documents on our church website (www.audubonchurch.org) in the “Our Beliefs” section and those on our ecclesiastical association website (www.firefellowship.org) in both the “Beliefs” and “Position Statements” sections, and by approval of the elders.

5.2 ADBC PROPERTY

5.2.1 All church property (including but not limited to audio/video equipment, kitchen supplies, tables, and chairs) may not be removed from the church premises for non-official church functions. Church property may be reserved and taken off the church premises by ADBC members for officially-sanctioned church events, and only after having gained approval from the elders.

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