

# Constitution of Stone Creek Bible Church



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CONTENTS	Pg. #
PREAMBLE	3
STATEMENT OF FAITH	4-6
NAME AND PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH	7
CHURCH GOVERNMENT	
ELDERS	
PURPOSE & FUNCTION	8
QUALIFICATIONS	8
SELECTION	8-9
NUMBER & COMPOSITION	9-10
TERM OF SERVICE	10
RESIGNATION & REMOVAL	10
MEETINGS	10
DUTIES	10
PASTORS	
PURPOSE & FUNCTION	11
QUALIFICATIONS	11
SELECTION	11-12
TERMINATION	12
RESIGNATION	12
SCRIPTURAL MEMBERSHIP	13-14
EXCLUSION FROM FELLOWSHIP	14
MEETINGS OF THE CHURCH	14
CHANGE TO CONSTITUTION	15
INTERPRETATION OF CONSTITUTION	15

## Preamble

Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no greater commandment than these." ~ Mark 12:30-31

"And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."  
~ Matthew 28:18-20

"But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."  
~ Matthew 20:25-28

"Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father... the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me."  
~ John 17:1, 22-23

## **Statement of Faith for Stone Creek Bible Church**

### **The Bible**

We believe the 66 books of the Old and New Testament Scriptures of the original autographs<sup>1</sup> are the inerrant and infallible Word of God. The writers, under the inspiration<sup>2</sup> of the Holy Spirit, revealed truth from God. Therefore the Bible is the supreme authority on what ought to be believed and obeyed. Thus the Bible should be the foremost source for teaching and learning about God and His desires for people.

### **The Godhead**

We believe there is only one living and true God, who is triune, a single essence eternally subsisting<sup>3</sup> in three equal persons<sup>4</sup>: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We can know God because He has revealed Himself, but He is beyond full comprehension. He is self-existent, eternal, unchanging, all knowing, all wise, all powerful, perfectly holy, perfectly just, perfectly good, loving, gracious, and merciful. To Him is due worship, service, and obedience, from all people.

### **Humans and sin**

We believe humans are uniquely made in the image of God, and are intended by God for relationship with Him. The first humans, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God, which is sin, and fell from their original relationship with God. From Adam, sin and spiritual death, which is separation from God, came to all humans. Every human is sinful by nature and action, and condemned to eternal death, which is eternal separation from God.

### **Salvation**

We believe God has initiated and completes salvation. A person is covered by the atonement<sup>5</sup> of Jesus, and is completely justified<sup>6</sup>, and receives the gift of eternal life, by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. Only through faith in Jesus Christ can one be forgiven of sin, saved from condemnation, and reconciled to God. All this is due to God's magnificent grace<sup>7</sup>, and cannot be earned or contributed to by good or religious works. By God's grace, those in Christ are regenerated<sup>8</sup> and sealed<sup>9</sup> by the Holy Spirit, are adopted as God's children, will be sanctified<sup>10</sup> during this life, and glorified<sup>11</sup> in the future.

## **Jesus Christ**

We believe the Son of God has always been God from eternity past, a distinct person who is of the same essence as, and coequal with, the Father and the Holy Spirit. By Him all things were made. By the Holy Spirit, the eternal Son became incarnate<sup>12</sup> as the person of Jesus the Christ, fully God and fully man. He was born of the virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, and willingly suffered and died on a cross as a substitutionary atonement. Thus He is the Savior. He was resurrected<sup>13</sup> from the dead, ascended back into heaven, and is exalted at the right hand<sup>14</sup> of the Father, in glory, as Lord and King. Jesus Christ will come again from heaven to earth, personally, visibly, and suddenly, at a time only known by God.

## **The Holy Spirit**

We believe the Holy Spirit has always been God from eternity past, a distinct person of the same essence as, and coequal with, the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is vital to the life of a believer in Jesus Christ. He gives believers new spiritual life in regeneration. He indwells believers and purifies them of sin in sanctification. He helps believers by revealing truth<sup>15</sup>, leading and empowering them to live for and serve God<sup>16</sup>.

## **The Church<sup>17</sup>**

We believe the Church universal is a spiritual community of all true believers in Jesus Christ, of all places and of all time. Christ is the Head of the Church, and each believer is a part of His body. Believers are children of God and are brothers and sisters in Christ. Believers should participate in a local expression of the Church, a specific local congregation of believers, to be able to properly live out a life that God desires. It is important that a local church and the believers that make it up be marked by biblical beliefs and behavior. The Church and the members of it are to bring glory to God by worshipping God, proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, making disciples, ministering to one another, and central to it all is loving God and people.

## **The last things**

We believe that upon bodily death, the soul of a believer in Jesus Christ goes immediately into the wonderful presence of Christ, whereas the soul of an unbeliever awaits final judgment in Hades. All humans will be resurrected.<sup>18</sup> Believers in Jesus Christ will enjoy eternal life in heaven, in God's presence. Unbelievers will be condemned to eternal punishment in hell, separate from God.

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<sup>1</sup> Original autographs refers to the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek manuscripts of the original writers.

Although we do not possess those documents, we believe, by the providence of God, the inspired text can be ascertained, with great accuracy, from available manuscripts.

<sup>2</sup> The word used in 2 Timothy 3:16, often translated as “inspired”, from the Greek is literally understood as God-breathed. In speaking about the prophecies of Scripture, 2 Peter 1:20-21 pictures *the minds of* men being moved by the Holy Spirit like a sail boat is moved by the wind, so they could communicate from God.

<sup>3</sup> Subsisting means self-sustained existence

<sup>4</sup> Person means an actual, personal, rational, being. We are not to confuse this with God being a human, although the Son did take on humanity.

<sup>5</sup> Atonement means reparation for sin. There is a penalty for sin, because God is just. As sinners, humans are due the penalty of the wrath of God and eternal suffering. Jesus was sinless, so He did not deserve a penalty. In dying on the cross, Jesus made Himself a substitute to take the penalty, the wrath of God, which was due to others, and made reparation between people who trust Jesus and God. In place of atonement the term propitiation is sometimes used in Scripture, which means a sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God from a person and makes God favorable toward that person.

<sup>6</sup> Justification is the legal declaration of God, stating that a person is forgiven of all sin and no longer liable for punishment, and that He accounts one to be righteous, on the basis of faith in Jesus who is righteous. Justification is complete at the moment one’s faith is placed in Jesus Christ.

<sup>7</sup> Grace refers to what God gives as a free gift, based on a person’s faith.

<sup>8</sup> Regeneration is the act of God the Holy Spirit in which He imparts new spiritual life to a person (Titus 3:5).

<sup>9</sup> The Holy Spirit stays inside a person who trusts Jesus, as a guarantee that a person belongs to God, and God will claim and glorify that person at the end of time.

<sup>10</sup> Sanctification is a progressive work of God, from regeneration to glorification, so that a believer becomes more holy, clean from sin. Sanctification progresses as a believer cooperates with the Holy Spirit, giving oneself to obeying God, rather than sin.

<sup>11</sup> Glorification is the final step in salvation, where the body of a believer is resurrected as a perfect body (1 Corinthians 15:42-44) and reunited with that person’s soul, in which state they will be in the presence of God forever, freed from sin and physical problems.

<sup>12</sup> Incarnate means in flesh. Rather than say “He became human,” which may hint that He ceased to be God, this term is used theologically to indicate He remained God but also took on humanity.

<sup>13</sup> Resurrection, biblically, means to have body. The resurrected body has some continuity with the earthly body of an individual. (1 Corinthians 15, John 20)

<sup>14</sup> “At the right hand” refers to reigning in power with the one on the throne.

<sup>15</sup> Some examples of revealing truth: inspiring Scripture, prompting prophecy, teaching believers, and convicting the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.

<sup>16</sup> Some examples of empowering: will lead Christians and defeat fleshly desires, as well as produce godly character, gives spiritual gifts to equip every Christian for ministry, and specially influences Christians by filling them.

<sup>17</sup> The Constitution of Stone Creek Bible Church includes additional information on what we believe about the Church.

<sup>18</sup> Resurrection, biblically, means to have body. The body of a believer is resurrected as a perfect body (1 Corinthians 15:42-44) and reunited with that person’s soul.

**ARTICLE I**  
**Name**

The name of this church will be Stone Creek Bible Church.

**ARTICLE II**  
**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of the Church is to glorify God by fulfilling the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)

## **ARTICLE III Church Government**

### **Section one - Elders**

It is clear in the New Testament that elders are to shepherd and oversee the church, under the direction of Christ, the Chief Shepherd. (1 Peter 5:1-4, 1 Tim. 3:1).

#### **A. Purpose and Function**

The purpose of the elders is to shepherd the church, as caring servants, and be examples in faith and conduct. (1 Peter 5:1-4, 1 Tim. 3:1)

As servants among the Church, the Elders should seek unity in all things, according to the will of God, following after Christ, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and informed by God's written word. (Philippians 2:2, Acts 15:28, 20:28, 1 Peter 5:1-4)

The functions of the Elders include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Shepherding with consideration and gentleness (1 Peter 5:1-4)
- Making provision for sound, biblical teaching of the church (1 Peter 5:1-4; 1 Tim. 5:17-22; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- Protecting the church by defending sound doctrine and seeking its unity, locally and globally (Acts 20:28-32; 2 Tim. 2:23-26; Titus 1:9-11; 2 John 9-11)
- Appointing and removing elders and pastors (Titus 1:5, Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 5:19-22)
- Overseeing the affairs of the church, making decisions primarily in relation to these other functions, and delegating decision making regarding affairs of the church (Acts 15:2-6, 22-23; 16:4, 1 Timothy 3:1)

#### **B. Qualifications**

Elders are qualified by character, spiritual maturity, and exemplary Christ-following behavior. They must understand, believe, and be able to defend sound biblical doctrine, and must have proven ability and be ready to shepherd. (scriptures guiding these principles: 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 5:22, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-3, 1 Timothy 5:22)

#### **C. Selection**

The Board of Elders is responsible for the appointment of Elders (scriptures guiding this principle: Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5). Elders are to constantly be in the process of identifying men whom the Holy Spirit may be raising up for eldership (scriptures guiding this principle: Acts 20:28, 1 Timothy 3:10, 13). When the Board of Elders determines that a man is called to eldership or feel there is need for additional elder(s), they will initiate the following process:

- (1) A candidate for Elder will be considered only after he has, in writing, expressed agreement with the doctrinal statements and agreed to abide by the Bylaws and Constitution of Stone Creek Bible Church.

- (2) The Board of Elders will do a thorough evaluation of the biblical qualifications of each candidate.
- (3) Whenever possible, the Board of Elders will make the individual candidates known to the congregation for the purpose of congregational feedback. Every congregant, identifying themselves by name, will be strongly encouraged to express their affirmation, feedback, or concerns within a reasonable time period. It is the *responsibility* of individuals in the congregation to express to the current elders any concerns about any elder candidate. (scriptures guiding this practice: Acts 6:6 and 15:22)
- (4) The Board of Elders will consider all feedback and investigate any concerns.
- (5) The Board of Elders will prayerfully come to a consensus on the individual men they believe should be appointed as Elders. (scriptures guiding these principles: Acts 20:28, 15:25)
- (6) The Board of Elders will present the new Elders to the congregation and lay hands on them in prayer. (scriptures guiding this principle: Acts 14:23, 6:5-6, 13:2-3)

D. Number and Composition (scriptures guiding these practices: Titus 1:5, Acts 14:23, 15:2)

- (1) The Board of Elders shall be comprised of three or more Members of Stone Creek Bible Church, and it is advisable to include at least one Pastor and at least one Elder who is not a Pastor.
- (2) The Board of Elders may change in number from time to time as seems fit, but should always strive to be at least four.<sup>19</sup>
- (1) The board is considered deficient if there are fewer than three elders. A deficient board of Elders should only conduct the minimum amount of business necessary for the continuing function of the corporation and the church.
  - a. In the case of two remaining elders: The remaining elders will appoint a new elder(s), as soon as possible, following the regular Stone Creek Bible Church constitutional process.
  - b. In the case of one remaining elder: The remaining elder will choose an outside body of elders to assist in reestablishment of a Stone Creek Bible Church Board of Elders, following the regular Stone Creek Bible Church constitutional process.
  - c. In the case of zero remaining elders: The Stone Creek Bible Church staff will call a meeting of the church body. The Stone

Creek Bible Church body will choose an outside body of elders to assist in reestablishment of a Stone Creek Bible Church Board of Elders, following the regular Stone Creek Bible Church constitutional process. The body will also appoint necessary officers for the corporation, until a Board of Elders is reestablished.

E. Term of Service

Scripture indicates no fixed term for Elders, therefore no specific fixed term for office is required. An elder shall serve as long as he is called and appointed to serve, and remains qualified to do so. It is advisable that Elders should not normally serve for more than six consecutive years without taking some time off.

F. Resignation or Removal

Considering the qualifications as well as any personal factors that might affect his service, any individual's service as an Elder may be discontinued by his own decision, or by the decision of the other Elders. Leaving the Board of Elders does not preclude future service as an Elder, subject to the regular Elder selection process.

G. Meetings – Regular meetings will be held at such times, places, and frequency as agreed upon by the Board of Elders

H. Duties – In accordance with the Purpose and Function of Elders, the practical responsibilities of the Elders include:

- (1) Continually evaluate the overall direction of Stone Creek Bible Church to ensure consistency with biblical truth and principles.
- (2) Have oversight of all policies, direction, and activities of the ministries of Stone Creek Bible Church.
- (3) Have oversight of all positions in the church, including hiring, appointment, responsibilities, and removal.
- (4) To oversee all means of raising and receiving funds, and steward the disbursement of funds.
- (5) To oversee the use of the facilities of this church for all extra or secular purposes.
- (6) Regularly communicate with the congregation on such matters as church direction, finances, leadership updates, church discipline, and to specially exhort the congregation. The communications should be documented.

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<sup>19</sup> The Bylaws require a minimum of three elders, and recommend five. In this Constitution we state that we strive for four, so that if we lose one Elder, we are not pressed to fill a vacancy immediately.

## Section Two – Pastors

Elders and pastors are to shepherd the church. In addition to shepherding, pastors have the specific gifting and responsibilities of teaching and preaching (Ephesians 4:11, 2 Timothy 4:1-4).

### A. Purpose and Function

The purpose of Pastors is similar to that of Elders, which is to shepherd the church, as caring servants, and be examples in faith and conduct. (1 Peter 5:1-4, 1 Tim. 3:1)

Pastors should follow after Christ, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and informed by God's written word. (Acts 15:28, 20:32, 1 Peter 5:1-4)

The functions of the Pastors include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Shepherd with consideration and gentleness (1 Peter 5:1-4)
- Teach and preach sound biblical doctrine (1 Tim. 5:17, 2 Tim. 3:16-17, Titus 1:9)
- Help preserve the unity in the church, locally and globally (Eph. 4:3)
- Equip believers for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:11-12)

### B. Qualifications

Pastors are qualified by character, spiritual maturity, and exemplary Christ-following behavior. They must understand, believe, and be able to preach, teach, and defend sound biblical doctrine, and must have demonstrated ability to shepherd. (scriptures guiding these principles: 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 5:17, 5:22, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-3, 1 Timothy 5:22)

### C. Selection

The Board of Elders is responsible for determining the need for Pastors. Elder(s) shall establish and oversee the process of identifying potential Pastors. The Board of Elders is responsible for the appointment of Pastors (scriptures guiding this principle: Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5). The appointment process shall include:

- (1) A pastoral candidate will be considered only after he has, in writing, expressed agreement with the doctrinal statements and agreed to abide by the Bylaws and Constitution of Stone Creek Bible Church.
- (2) The Board of Elders will do a thorough evaluation of the qualifications of any candidate for appointment, based on biblical criteria.
- (3) Whenever possible, the Board of Elders will make the individual candidate(s) known to the congregation for the purpose of congregational feedback. Every congregant, identified by name, will be strongly encouraged to express their affirmation, feedback, or concerns within a reasonable time period. It is the *responsibility* of individuals in the

congregation to express to the current Elders any concerns about any Pastoral candidate. (scriptures guiding this principle: Acts 6:6 and 15:22)

- (4) The Board of Elders will investigate any concerns and consider all feedback.
  - (5) The Board of Elders will prayerfully come to a consensus on the appointment of a Pastor(s). (scriptures guiding these principles: Acts 15:25, 20:28)
  - (6) The Board of Elders will present the new Pastor(s) to the congregation and lay hands on him/them in prayer. (scriptures guiding this principle: Acts 14:23, 6:5-6, 13:2-3)
- D. Termination – A Pastor’s service may be discontinued by the decision of the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders shall work out a reasonable transition for both the sake of the Pastor and the well being of the Church.
- E. Resignation – A Pastor shall communicate with the Elder Board as soon as he has any intent to leave his position. In turn, the Elder Board shall honor the Pastor’s early communication by working out a reasonable transition for both the sake of the Pastor and the well being of the Church.

## **ARTICLE IV Scriptural Membership**

### **Definition**

Stone Creek Bible Church recognizes scriptural members, as established in the Bylaws. We recognize membership in the body of Christ, which is established by trust in Jesus Christ and expressed by participation in the fellowship of the church. (Eph. 2:8-10, 1 Cor. 12:12-14, Titus 3:5-6, Rom. 12:3-13)

- A. Ordinances – These practices, commanded by Christ, give outward expression of trust in Jesus Christ and are carried out in a church fellowship.
  - (1) Believer’s baptism
  - (2) The Lord’s supper (communion) (Luke 22:19-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)
  
- B. Participation in church fellowship includes things such as
  - (1) Loving and serving one another (Matthew 22:36-40, John 13:34-35, Matthew 20:25-28)
  - (2) Exercising spiritual gifts, serving toward the building up of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4:11-13)
  - (3) Joining regularly in fellowship and group worship (Hebrews 10:24-25, Colossians 3:16, James 5:16)
  - (4) Giving regularly to support the ministry of the church (1 Timothy 5:17)
  - (5) Sharing with brothers in need (Ephesians 4:28)
  - (6) Maintaining unity (John 17:23, Ephesians 4, Philippians 2:3-5, 1 Cor. 11:18-19)
  - (7) Holding to sound biblical doctrine (Ephesians 4:14, 1 Corinthians 11:2)
  - (8) Not putting stumbling blocks in a brother’s way (Mark 9:42, 1 Corinthians 8:9)
  - (9) Praying for one another (James 5:16, Ephesians 6:18)
  - (10) Getting appropriately involved in the restoration of a sinning brother (Galatians 6:1, Matthew 18:15-20)
  - (11) Forgiving one another as the Lord forgave you (Colossians 3:13, Matthew 18:15-35)

- (12) Acknowledging there are people who are given responsibility to shepherd and lead you in the Lord, and therefore submitting to them (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Hebrews 13:17)

**ARTICLE V**  
**Exclusion from Fellowship**

The Board of Elders reserves the right to exclude someone from fellowship at Stone Creek Bible Church.

**ARTICLE VI**  
**Meetings of the Church**

Regular meetings of the church shall be at such times as the Board of Elders decide for worship, prayer, fellowship, and teaching the Word of God.

## **ARTICLE VII Change to Constitution**

As protectors of the church and sound doctrine, the Elders are responsible for changes to the Constitution. When the Board of Elders determines that a change needs to be made to the Constitution, they will initiate the following process:

- (1) The Board of Elders will do a thorough evaluation of how the Bible informs the subject under consideration for change, and prayerfully consider any possible changes.
- (2) The Board of Elders will make the proposed amendments known to the congregation and available in writing for review and congregational feedback, and provide reasonable time for such review and feedback.
- (3) The Board of Elders will investigate any concerns and consider all feedback.
- (4) The Board of Elders will prayerfully come to a consensus on the proposed changes.
- (5) The congregation will be notified of the results of the process, and if any changes were made, a revised version of the Constitution will be made available to the congregation.

## **ARTICLE VIII Interpretation**

It is the prerogative of the Board of Elders to interpret this Constitution.