

**CONSTITUTION
OF
THE BETHEL
CHURCH
OF
WELLS COUNTY,
INC.**

2019 REVISION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREAMBLE	4
ARTICLE 1 - NAME	4
ARTICLE 2 - PURPOSE	4
ARTICLE 3 - AFFILIATION	4
• Authority	
• Identification (See appendix A)	
• Cooperation	
ARTICLE 4 - COVENANT (See appendix B)	16
ARTICLE 5 - ARTICLES OF FAITH (The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith)	4
ARTICLE 6 - GOVERNANCE	5
• Offices	
• Elders	
• Deacons	
• Appointment of offices	
• Procedure of appointment	
• Nomination	
• Affirmation	
• Ordination	
ARTICLE 7 - MEMBERSHIP	6
• General requirements	
• Specific requirements	
• Reception into membership	
• Conversion	
• Request for membership	
• Affirmation by congregation	
• Termination of membership	
• By physical death	
• By transfer	
• By resignation	
• By excommunication	
• Records of membership	
ARTICLE 8 - CHURCH DISCIPLINE	8
• General statement	
• Formative discipline	
• Corrective discipline	

ARTICLE 9 - ORDINANCES	9
• General statement	
• Baptism	
• Its candidates	
• Its necessity for membership	
• Its mode	
• The Lord's Supper	
ARTICLE 10 - LEGAL OFFICERS	10
• Purpose	
• Qualifications	
• Authority	
ARTICLE 11 - CHURCH BUSINESS MEETINGS	10
• General statement	
• Notice of meetings	
• Quorum	
• Chairmanship	
• Voting	
ARTICLE 12 - CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY	11
• Extent	
• Amendments	
APPENDICES	
• Appendix A - What is a Reformed Baptist?	12
• Appendix B - Covenant obligations of Bethel	16
• Appendix C - Family integrated worship	19
• Appendix D - Philosophy and vision for corporate worship	22
• Appendix E - Gospel structure of corporate worship	25
• Appendix F - Philosophy of engagement for missions	27

PREAMBLE

We, the members of Bethel Church do ordain and establish the following Articles, to which we voluntarily and solemnly submit ourselves.

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this Church shall be The Bethel Church of Wells County, Inc.

ARTICLE 2 - PURPOSE

The purpose of this Church is to glorify the God of the Scriptures by maintaining and promoting His worship both individually and corporately, by evangelizing sinners, and by edifying His saints. Therefore, we are committed to the proclamation of God's perfect Law and of the glorious Gospel of His grace through all the world, to the defense of that "faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), and to the pure and faithful celebration of the ordinances of the New Covenant.

ARTICLE 3 - AFFILIATION

AUTHORITY. We acknowledge no ecclesiastical authority other than our Lord Jesus Christ, who is Head of the Church and who directs the affairs of the Church through Elders chosen and ordained according to the precepts of Holy Scripture. The Elders themselves at all times and in all their activities stand under the authority of Holy Scripture.

IDENTIFICATION. Bethel Church identifies itself in doctrine and practice to the historical lineage of the Reformed Baptist tradition also known as the Particular Baptists. Please see Appendix A

COOPERATION. Bethel Church may and does cooperate with other likeminded Churches and associations in matters of mutual interest and concern. We may seek the assistance and counsel of other Churches in matters of special concern to us, but the decision of no other Church or association shall at any time be acknowledged as binding on this Church.

ARTICLE 4 - COVENANT

Please see Appendix B

ARTICLE 5 - ARTICLES OF FAITH

We adopt as the fullest expression of our faith The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689. The ultimate authority in all matters of faith, order, and morals is and must be the Bible alone, which truth is clearly set forth in the opening article of the Confession itself. This historic document is, however, an excellent summary of "the things most surely believed among us," and we find it to be assistance in controversy, a confirmation

in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness. Here the members of our Church will have a body of Divinity in concise summary and by means of Scriptural proofs will be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in them (I Pet. 3:15).

ARTICLE 6 - GOVERNANCE

The government of this Church will be of the Elder type with the authority invested by the Church in a Council of Elders. The goal and desire of the Elder Council is to be in one accord on all issues. However, in recognition of the impossibility of always achieving unanimity, the Council of Elders will work with a simple majority (plus one if number of Elders is five or more).

OFFICES. Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His Church and He governs His Church by His Word through offices whom He appoints. There are two types of offices in the Church: Elders and Deacons.

ELDERS. Elders must be men who meet the qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, and subscribe to the 1689 London Baptist Confession. Elders may be added as the Council of Elders deems necessary.

DEACONS. Deacons must be men who meet the qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, who subscribe to the 1689 London Baptist Confession, and have a heart of service in assisting the Elders in meeting the material needs of the congregation. The number of deacons shall not be fixed but determined by the Elders based on the current needs of the congregation.

APPOINTMENT OF OFFICES. The appointment of Elders and Deacons is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. He has ordained, however, that each local Church exercise the responsibility of recognizing those whom He is appointing to be Elders and Deacons in that particular Church. Elders and Deacons are ordained, or appointed, to office by the laying on of hands by the existing Eldership. This is an expression of approval for which the Elders are responsible. Therefore, each officer must have the approval, not only of the Church as a whole, but of the Eldership in particular. The Lord's appointment of an individual to either of these offices is recognized by means of that individual's possession of those graces and gifts required by Scripture for the particular office and his own conviction that the Lord is calling him to minister in that office. The recognition of officers is a matter of such importance that it should never be pursued without much prayerful waiting upon God, an honest study of the relevant passages of Scripture, and a frank evaluation of those who are being considered. Each member of the Church has a spiritual responsibility to be intelligently informed regarding these matters.

PROCEDURE OF APPOINTMENT. The recognition of those whom the Lord has appointed to bear office in this church is executed in three steps: nomination by Elder Council, affirmation by Church and, ordination by laying on of hands.

1. NOMINATION. Nominations to either office are made by the Eldership. The Council of Elders must first consider a member as a candidate for office and discuss his qualifications for the particular office. Upon agreement that the man under consideration is qualified to serve, the Elders are to discuss the matter with the candidate, giving him sufficient time to make a prayerful and thoughtful decision. After gaining his assent and his acknowledgment of the responsibility, the Elders must present his nomination to the Church for evaluation for a period of three weeks. This gives the individual members of the congregation time to consider the candidate and provide feedback to the Elders. All concerns determined to be valid raised by individual members of the congregation must be discussed and resolved with the candidate before proceeding to formal Church affirmation.

2. AFFIRMATION. Any Church meeting for the affirmation of offices shall be announced on at least three weeks prior to the meeting. The nominees shall be separately discussed and affirmed by vote. During the discussion the nominee under consideration and members of his immediate family shall leave the presence of the assembly. Concerning the vote of affirmation, the Church should seek unity of mind, but should such unity not be fully realized, no less than three-fifths of those voting shall be required for affirmation.

3. ORDINATION. Following the affirmation of an office there shall be a portion of a regular worship service set aside at which time the officer shall be ordained by the laying on of the hands of the Eldership. The special prayers of the whole church should always accompany this solemn act. The laying on of the Elders' hands shall signify their affirmation and accountability of an office.

ARTICLE 7 - MEMBERSHIP

PREREQUISITES FOR MEMBERSHIP

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS. To be eligible for membership, a person must demonstrate repentance of sin toward God and the fruits thereof, as well as faith in our Lord Jesus Christ which produces godly works. They must be baptized by immersion after exercising faith in Christ; and to the satisfaction of the Elders express substantial agreement with the purpose (as stated in Article 2), Covenant (as stated in Article 4), Confession (as stated in Article 5), and government of this Church (as stated in Article 6). Furthermore, they must not be under the biblically warranted corrective discipline of a genuine Church.

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS.

1. Credible testimony of repentance from sin and toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as one's only hope of salvation.
2. Belief in the innerency of the Holy Scriptures and belief in the whole counsel of God's word therein.
3. A completed reading of and agree to submit and adhere to: the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith, informing the Elders of any questions or disagreements.

4. A completed reading of the Constitution and a willingness to submit to it.
5. Evidence of good standing with a previous Church in case of transfers.
6. In cases of professions of faith in Christ, submit to baptism by immersion at first opportunity.
7. Agreement to make diligent use of the means of grace. (see Appendix B).

RECEPTION INTO MEMBERSHIP

1. BY CONVERSION. Any person that comes to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ under this Church's ministry and is baptized publicly, thus signifying the affirmation of the Elders and members will automatically be recognized as a member of this Church.

2. BY REQUEST FOR MEMBERSHIP. Any person desiring membership must notify the Elders. And having reviewed the request for membership, the Elders will interview the candidate to answer any questions the candidate may have and to ensure that the candidate has a credible profession of faith and is in agreement with the beliefs and practices of the Church.

3. BY AFFIRMATION OF CONGREGATION. If the Elders are satisfied that the candidate meets all the membership requirements, they will present the candidate to the Church for affirmation. The members of the congregation will have three weeks to voice any concerns or ask any questions concerning the candidate. Such concerns and questions are to be presented to the Elders for consideration. If questions and/or concerns are raised, the candidate will not be received into the membership of the Church until the Elders are satisfied that the questions and/or concerns are resolved and the candidate is suitable for membership.

TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

TYPES OF TERMINATION

1. BY PHYSICAL DEATH. When a member of the Church is removed from our midst by death, his name shall be transferred to the file of former members.

2. BY TRANSFER. If a Church member in good standing whose conduct does not warrant corrective discipline desires to leave the membership of this Church, he is strongly urged to leave in an orderly way by privately indicating that desire to the Elders along with his reasons for leaving. The Elders will provide for a transitional period which will allow the departing member to decide where the letter should be transferred. Such a transitional status will be allowed to continue as long as the departing member maintains regular contact with the Elders, does not unnecessarily prolong the transitional process, and does not engage in conduct requiring the exercise of Church discipline.

When it is so requested, the Elders may transfer a departing member of good standing to the fellowship of another Church. A letter of transfer will be sent to the appropriate officer(s) of the Church to which the member wishes to transfer. No such letter may be

given to a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of this Church. The Elders may refuse to grant a letter of transfer to any Church which is in their judgment disloyal to "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" or which does not exercise godly care over its members.

3. BY RESIGNATION. Membership in this Church is entered into and initiated jointly, by voluntary commitment from the individual applicant and acceptance by the Church. Accordingly, termination of membership is not recognized unilaterally under all circumstances. As a general rule, a member may voluntarily resign from membership in this Church. A resignation offered in order to frustrate or thwart the procedures of corrective discipline is not valid, and the Church may proceed with church discipline, in accordance with the procedures outlined in Article 8.

4. BY EXCOMMUNICATION. (also see Article 8). According to the teaching of the Bible, a congregation must cut off from its fellowship any person(s) who:

- * Teaches and/or persistently holds false heretical doctrine.
- * Blatantly and persistently conducts himself in a way inconsistent with his Christian profession.
- * Persists in disturbing the unity or peace of the Church.
- * Persists in neglecting his membership responsibilities.

RECORDS OF MEMBERSHIP. The Elders shall keep a file of all past and present members. This file shall have two divisions: regular members and former members. The file of former members shall include a date and reason Church membership was terminated, as well as any other necessary information.

ARTICLE 8 - CHURCH DISCIPLINE

GENERAL STATEMENT. The goals of formative and corrective discipline are always the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the Church and the restoration and spiritual growth of the offender.

FORMATIVE DISCIPLINE. Every disciple of Christ is disciplined by Him personally and providentially without intervening mediators, and through the Church by word and ordinance. Mutual submission to one another and to the Elders whom the Lord has set over His Church (I Pet. 5:5) will result in the sanctification of each member individually and of the whole body of the Church collectively. There are occasions, however, when formative discipline alone is insufficient and corrective discipline becomes necessary.

CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE. Corrective discipline becomes necessary when heretical doctrine or disorderly, divisive, immoral, or scandalous conduct is established among the members of the Church. As a general rule an effort must be made to resolve difficulty, correct error, and remove offense through counsel and admonition before more serious steps are taken. The specific and issue related principles given in scripture must be carefully followed and applied to each case of corrective discipline. In some

cases, a public admonition and public repentance may be warranted. (Matthew 18; 1 Corinthians 5; Titus 3)

In other cases, some of the privileges of membership may need to be suspended, such as affirmation on offices, until biblically resolved. In the most extreme cases excommunication from the membership of the Church may be necessary. All the members of the Church are required to submit to and enforce as appropriate the decision of the Church in acts of corrective discipline. Since the Church is a spiritual body, the discipline implemented by the Church in corrective discipline is spiritual. They include public verbal reproof, social avoidance and withdrawal of distinctively Christian fellowship and removal from the membership of the Church. They are intended to effect repentance through a sense of sorrow and shame. The Church has no right however, to confiscate goods, revoke conjugal rights, or inflict corporal punishment of any kind. Nevertheless, a member guilty of criminal actions may be delivered to the civil authorities according to the rule of Scripture.

ARTICLE 9 - ORDINANCES

GENERAL STATEMENT. There are two ordinances of special significance that our Lord has commanded us to observe, namely, Baptism and the Lords Supper. Neither of them has saving merit, nor is any grace imparted to the recipient through the water of baptism or through the bread and the cup of the supper. These ordinances are a means of grace feeding and nourishing the faith of the believers who participate in them by their right apprehension of the gospel.

BAPTISM

1. ITS CANDIDATES. Only confessed disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ are proper candidates for Baptism, and all such persons should be baptized and joined to the Church.

2. ITS NECESSITY FOR MEMBERSHIP. Believing that Baptism by immersion in water is the God ordained sign of one's personal union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and the entrance into the visible community of the people of God. We shall receive into the membership of the Church only those who have professed faith in Christ through confession of and repentance from sin are then baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit".

3. ITS MODE. Immersion in water is the biblical mode of Baptism, is necessary for its due administration, and is the only mode to be administered by this Church.

THE LORD'S SUPPER. Whereas Baptism is the initiatory ordinance by which one enters the visible church, and should be observed only once by each believer, the Lord's Supper should be celebrated frequently by the assembled Church. While this is a most holy ordinance and should be observed with solemnity and dignity, the bread and the cup of the Supper are and remain only symbols of the body and the shed blood of

our Lord Jesus Christ. In order to maintain the purity of this ordinance, the Elders will faithfully seek to insure that only true believers are admitted to the table.

ARTICLE 10 - LEGAL OFFICERS

PURPOSE. In order to comply with Indiana State Law governing nonprofit organizations, this Church shall designate Trustees as such officers to represent the Church before the state. Appointment of Trustees shall be the responsibility of the Elders.

QUALIFICATIONS. Trustees shall be regular members in good standing. Trustees can hold the office of Elders and/or Deacons, but the Elders may also designate regular members as a Trustee as well.

AUTHORITY. Trustees operate under the authority of the Elders if they are not Elders themselves. Since their office is not Biblically mandated, their state requirements will be submitted to by the Church when they don't contradict Scripture but they have no role in governing the affairs of this Church.

ARTICLE 11 - CHURCH BUSINESS MEETINGS

GENERAL STATEMENT. The Elders shall call all congregational meetings. There shall be a business meeting of the Church held on a Sunday in December for the hearing of reports, the adoption of a budget, and the transaction of any other business which the Elders bring before the Church. A second meeting shall be held on a Sunday in June for the hearing of reports and making any necessary adjustments to the budget and any other business that the Elders bring before the Church. Special business meetings may be called at other times at the discretion of the Elders.

NOTICE OF MEETINGS. Notice of all congregational meetings in which business is to be transacted requiring a vote of affirmation shall be announced at least three weeks consecutively prior to the meeting. Other business meetings at which there is no business transacted requiring a vote of affirmation may be called at the discretion of the Elders without such notice.

QUORUM. The members present at any properly convened congregational meeting shall be a minimum of 25 percent to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

CHAIRMANSHIP. One of the Elders shall preside at all business meetings.

VOTING. All members except those suspended by the Church shall constitute the voting membership of the Church. All voting members should regard their presence at a duly called membership meeting as a requirement of their membership covenant unless providentially hindered. The Elders shall determine whether absentee votes will be permitted on a case by case basis as members make known their reason for absence.

Each member will receive a ballot with their names attached to be used in the voting process.

ARTICLE 12 - CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY

EXTENT. This Constitution, as with any other non-inspired document, is not infallible. It does, however, reflect an earnest and sincere attempt to apply the Scriptures in ordering the life of this local Church. Furthermore, we as members of this Church, including the Elders, have solemnly committed ourselves to follow this Constitution in ordering the life of this Church (see the Preamble).

AMENDMENTS. When the Elders deem it necessary to make an Amendment(s) to this Constitution it may be adopted by a three fourths majority of members present and voting at a duly convened congregational business meeting. Proposed amendments by the Elders shall be distributed to the congregation in written form at least three weeks prior to such a meeting.

APPENDIX A IDENTIFICATION:

“Reformed Baptist” is a term not particularly well-known in evangelical circles. The name indicates both historical roots and distinct theological characteristics.

Historically, a Reformed Baptist identifies with a tradition that emerged directly from the Reformed Protestant movement. During the Reformation in 16th -17th century England there was a group of churchmen called the Puritans. The Puritans were believers who desired to see the church fully reform beyond any vestiges of Roman Catholicism or any other false teaching. There were three primary groups that made up the Puritans: Presbyterians, Independents, and Particular Baptists, which today are referred to as “Reformed Baptists.” They all shared common beliefs in the gospel and reformational doctrines, but the Baptists were set apart by a few beliefs. They believed in a church independent from state control that was governed congregationally and overseen in each local congregation by a group of elders. Also, they rejected the doctrine of paedobaptism (infant baptism). The summation of their beliefs were written down in the 2nd London Baptist Confession of 1689. Adhering to this historic reformed confession of faith is the primary distinctive of a Reformed Baptist. It shares themes and most of its language with the confessions of the other Puritans—the Westminster Confession of the Presbyterians and the Savoy Declaration of the Independents, yet it seeks to correct the theological errors that persisted in each.

Theologically, there are several key characteristics that accompanying being a Reformed Baptist. Most simply, it means we are both Reformed and Baptist. We believe in the 5 Solas of the Reformation that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone to the glory of God alone. And that Scripture alone is the sole infallible authority for the faith and practice of the church.

Additionally, being Reformed means...

1. We are Calvinistic. We believe in the doctrines of grace.

Total Depravity (Man is spiritually dead and thus unable to turn to God in faith and repentance prior to being born again. Each man is a free agent but does not possess free will, because it is not within his nature to trust in Christ.)

Unconditional Election (God chose to save us of His own free will and not based on our foreseen faith or good works.)

Limited Atonement or Particular Redemption (Christ’s work to atone for our sins was effectual and objective and therefore was only accomplished for the elect, though all mankind benefits in some manner from His redemptive work for His church. He atoned for the sins of all men without distinction, but not all men without exception. He saved the whole world from their sins in that His elect come from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.)

Irresistible Grace (God regenerates us in order to make us willing followers of Christ and not vice versa. Grace will always be resisted until God chooses to cause us to be born again, after which we joyfully comply with grace. In other words, regeneration precedes faith. The grace of regeneration does not require our acceptance, but rather creates it.)

Perseverance/Preservation of the Saints (All those whom God elects and regenerates are also caused to persevere in the faith by the work of the Holy Spirit. Though there are those that once proclaimed the faith but now reject it, they are understood to never have been born again (1 John 2:19). Jesus does not lose any of His sheep.)

2. We are confessional.

As a statement of faith and rule of practice we hold to the 1689 London Baptist Confession. We believe it to be subservient to Scripture. It is neither infallible nor inerrant like Scripture is. Yet, we believe it to be a healthy and accurate summation of the true Christian faith. Please see our preface to the confession [here](#).

3. We are Covenantal or hold to Covenant Theology.

We believe the covenants in Scripture are the framework in which redemptive history transpired. We believe that before creation God made a Covenant of Redemption among the persons of the Trinity that formalized the work and role of each person in God's decree to allow sin and to redeem a people for Himself. We believe Adam was under a Covenant of Works in the garden to obey and live. We believe the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants are not salvific in and of themselves, but provided the context and groundwork for Christ to enter into creation and merit salvation for fallen men. We believe the New Covenant is the Covenant of Grace which is made with the true church in the New Testament. It is unbreakable and retroactive to Old Testament saints who received New Covenant benefits via the Old Covenant economy (the summation of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants). We believe the church is a reconstituted Israel with no racial or ethnic boundaries. All those with true saving faith have been saved by the work accomplished by Christ in the New Covenant. Though the promise of salvation by the Messiah was prevalent and progressively revealed in greater detail in the Old Covenant, no one has ever been saved by their obedience to the command "do this and live" that was operative in the Old Covenant context.

4. We practice the Regulative Principle of Worship.

We only implement into formal public worship the elements of worship which are explicitly prescribed in God's Word. We do not believe that whatever is not explicitly condemned is allowable (i.e., the Normative Principle). Therefore, the church is limited to practicing only the elements of worship given to us— the public reading and preaching of Scripture, prayer, singing, and the two ordinances or sacraments of the New Covenant (baptism and the Lord's Supper). We further believe that the Regulative

Principle of Worship restricts baptism and the Lord's Supper to professing believers that have given evidence of true conversion.

5. We believe in the Moral Law of God.

The Moral Law of God is based in God's character and is therefore always true and applicable. In the context of God's covenants there is additional Positive Law for each covenant that likewise must be obeyed at the time that each covenant is in place. The positive law for Adam in the Covenant of Works was to not eat of the fruit of a certain tree and to work and keep the garden. In the Abrahamic Covenant the positive law of circumcision was implemented. In the Mosaic covenant there were extensive ceremonial and civil positive laws added. In the Davidic Covenant there were positive laws for the kings and his subjects to adhere to. However, all those positive laws are abrogated in the New Covenant in which we are given new positive laws such as baptism, the Lord's Supper, evangelism, etc. Nevertheless, from the beginning of creation into eternity the Moral Law of God has been in place. It is known to all men by virtue of being made in the image and likeness of God (though men do indeed seek to suppress it). It is summarized in the Ten Commandments which are therefore still applicable for believers today. And it was further summarized by Jesus when He said the greatest commandment was to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And the 2nd greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets hang on these two commands.

Additionally, being Baptist means...

1. We practice credobaptism (the baptism of professing believers alone).

We only baptize those that give a credible profession of faith and evidence that accompanies their sincerity. We also only baptize by the method of immersion to accurately capture the symbolism of putting the old man to death and rising again in Christ.

We do not practice infant baptism. We believe infant baptism is a distortion of biblical teaching that only began in isolated areas in the mid-3rd century. In addition to the historical data, credobaptism by immersion is confirmed by a correct reading of Scripture, a correct application of the Regulative Principle of Worship, a complete application of Reformed hermeneutics, and by correct Covenant Theology. Both baptism and the Lord's Supper are fenced (restricted) by the same principle— to be given to professing believers only. Likewise membership in the church is only available to baptized professing believers. We recognize we differ from the majority of the Reformed tradition in this regard, but biblical doctrine has never been a matter of democracy or counting noses.

2. We are congregational.

There is no authoritative structure above the local church. Each local church is governed by a plurality of elders and deacons. Scripture teaches it is the gathered assembly that affirms its own elders and deacons and voices its decision on matters of worship, doctrine, and discipline. This means we are not part of any denomination.

While each congregation/local church is independent and autonomous, Reformed Baptists do associate with like-minded churches. Independency has never meant isolation. We work together with other Reformed Baptist churches by way of both formal and informal Associations. These associations do not exercise control or authority over individual churches, nor do they interfere with the affairs of their member churches. The local church is independent of external control and cannot and must not be subordinate to a higher central government.

While modern day Baptists are genealogically descended from the Particular Baptists, it would be inaccurate to refer to most of them as "Reformed Baptists." They have largely lost their theological and confessional identities. Most Baptists today have drifted far afield from the faith and practice of their theological forefathers. In fact, they are for the most part unidentifiable with our Puritan roots. Reformed Baptists on the other hand seek to preserve the orthodoxy fought for and practiced by those that have gone before us in the Reformed, Puritan, Particular Baptist tradition.

APPENDIX B COVENANT:

The Commitments Of The Elders To The Bethel Church Body

As shepherds and overseers of the local church, elders are entrusted with protecting and providing for the flock. This is accomplished through praying, teaching, equipping, leading, and caring for the church and her individual members. The following is an overview of the requirements for elders as spelled out within the Scriptures.

The Elders Covenant by the Grace of God...

- to appoint elders and deacons according to the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures. (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4)
- to be models of family shepherding to our own flocks, leading our wives and children according to the requirements of Scripture. (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9)
- to biblically and carefully examine all candidates for baptism and church membership verifying their conversion in accordance with the Scriptures and their personal confession of faith. (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 10:44-48)
- to prayerfully search the Scriptures in order to seek God's will for every circumstance and season our church family encounters, stewarding her resources to the best of our ability. (Romans 12:1-3; Acts 20:28-32; 1 Peter 5:1-4)
- to pray regularly for the members of Bethel for their spiritual growth and physical needs. (1 Thessalonians 5:12-18)
- to provide teaching and direction from the whole counsel of God. Systematically preaching and teaching through whole books of Scripture in order to reprove, correct, and train the people in righteousness being equipped for every good work. (Acts 20:27-32; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 3:16-4:1-5; Titus 2:1)
- to be on guard against false teachers and teachings by calling them out by name publicly and explaining and correcting their false teaching and or heresies for the flocks protection. (Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 1 John 4:1)
- to give biblical oversight to our weekly corporate worship gathering. Maintaining the regulative principle of worship in which Scripture alone sets the form and function of our worship. Under this truth we will read the word, preach the word, pray the word, sing the word, and see the word through baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- to lovingly exercise discipline when necessary, for the glory of God, the good of the one disciplined and the health and protection of the church as a whole. (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1; Titus 2:10-11; James 5:19-20)
- to set an example and join the members at Bethel in fulfilling the obligations of church membership as stated in the membership covenant. (Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Peter 5:3)

The Commitments Of The Members To The Bethel Church Body

As those who have experienced the grace of regeneration by the Holy Spirit through the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity to reflect the character of Christ. The Scriptures refer to this process of putting on the new man (righteousness) and putting off the old man (sin) as sanctification. The requirements of this membership covenant are in no way intended as an addition to the biblical obligations of a believer. Rather, this document functions primarily as an accessible yet non-exhaustive explanation of what the Scriptures teach about the obedience that faith produces.

We voluntarily and joyfully enter into this covenant, humbly acknowledging our remaining sin and shortcomings, but with prayerful dependence on the Omnipotent Spirit of God who is able to work in us that which is pleasing in His sight. We enter this covenant with a serious desire to please our God and adorn His doctrine to the best of our God-given ability.

I Covenant by the Grace of God...

- to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues of life and godliness to which they address. (Psalm 119; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21)
- to grow in the knowledge of, love for, and submission to the Triune God, through the means of grace including regular bible reading, prayer, and fellowship. (Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 5:1-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22)
- to lead our homes in family worship thereby pursuing the salvation and sanctification of our children, by instructing them in God's truth, while we also seek to exemplify that truth in our godly walk before them. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Ephesians 6:1-4)
- to follow the command and example of the Lord Jesus by participating in the ordinances (sacraments) prescribed to His church (Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32):
 - by being baptized by immersion after my conversion
 - by regularly remembering and proclaiming the person and work of Christ through the Lord's Supper. Rehearsing our salvation in the present "for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup", Remembering our salvation accomplished in the past "you proclaim the Lord's death", Rejoicing in anticipation of our salvation in the future "until he comes".
- to faithfully participate in the life of Bethel Church by gathering for worship on the Lord's Day, engaging in gospel-centered community, and serving our brothers and sisters and our neighbors as ourself. (Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25; Titus 3:14)
- to steward the resources God has given me, including time, talents, spiritual gifts, and finances. This includes regular financial giving, service, and participation in the Bethel family that is sacrificial, cheerful, and voluntary. (Matthew 25:14-30; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 1 Peter 4:10-11)
- to walk in holiness by the power of the Holy Spirit in all areas of life as an act of worship to Jesus Christ. Putting certain attitudes and actions to death while stirring and stimulating love and good deeds. A couple of examples would be:

- I will practice complete chastity unless married and, if married, complete fidelity within heterosexual and monogamous marriage. Complete chastity and fidelity means, among other things, that regardless of my marital status, I will pursue purity and abstain from sexually immoral practices such as adultery, homosexuality, premarital sex and pornography. (Romans 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, 10:8; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4)
- I will adorn the doctrine of God with my conversations, refraining from gossip, slander, malicious talk, divisiveness, or anything that would damage fellow members, undermine the elders authority, or diminish the ministry of the church in the world. (Romans 1:28-32, 13:13; Galatians 5:19-21; James 3:3-18)
- to take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, especially actions or situations that could present a stumbling block to a weaker brother while on the other hand refusing to judge one another harshly with a legalistic spirit. (1 Corinthians 8:1-13)
- to submit to the discipline of God through His Holy Spirit by:
 - following the biblical procedures for church discipline where sin is evident in another-the hope of such discipline being repentance and restoration.
 - receiving righteous and loving discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers. (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Hebrews 12:5-11)
- to do the following when I sin:
 - confess my sin to God and to fellow believers.
 - repent and seek help to put my sin to death. (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:6-10)
- to submit to the elders of the church and diligently strive for unity and peace with other members. (Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:5)
- to do the following should the providence of God cause me to leave the church:
 - to notify the elders, along with a written explanation that can be made available to other members.
 - to seek another church with which I can carry out my biblical responsibilities as a believer.

APPENDIX C FAMILY INTEGRATED WORSHIP:

FAMILIES TOGETHER ON THE LORD'S DAY

We believe it is a great privilege for a child to grow up in a Christian home and for the entire family to worship together, week in and week out in the Sunday morning worship service. Over time, this teaches the child much in the way of what a normal life as a Christian is to look like as well as the necessary connection each of us is to have with the local church. Here at Bethel Church, we believe parents should keep their children with them throughout the entire service.

Let me say this again (in different words) – rather than children or teens attending their own meetings separate from their parents, we believe that the Biblical pattern is for families to worship together. The only exception we see to this (both now and in the future) is to provide a safe place for the under 3's in a nursery. However, we do not wish to segregate older children and teens from the rest of the congregation – sending them off to different rooms or buildings. Instead, on earth, as it is in heaven, young and old together, with one voice in unity, we the gathered people of God worship Him together.

We also believe that there are times when it is entirely appropriate for specialized ministry to take place (outside of the Lord's Day morning service). One Biblical example of this is that older women are exhorted to teach the younger women (Titus 2:3-5), which presumably means that men are excluded from such a gathering.

While in no way wishing to be divisive or suggest that we are the only church in town obeying God, we practice "Family Integrated Worship" because of certain convictions we have. As we examine the Biblical truth, we find that throughout the centuries this has been the normal way in which the people of God have gathered. This is clear from both the Old and New Testaments.

Deuteronomy 31:11-13 reads, "When all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess."

Joshua 8:35 says, "There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them."

Ezra 10:1 – "While Ezra prayed and made confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, a very great assembly of men, women, and children, gathered to him out of Israel, for the people wept bitterly."

These and other scriptures testify to the fact that when God's people assembled, it was normal for children to be included.

In the New Testament, children were present during Christ's preaching and teaching ministry (Matthew 14:13-21).

When Paul wrote to the Church at Ephesus, he included a message for the children (Eph. 6:1-3). In doing so, a clear assumption was in his mind; that when his letter was read to the gathered Church, children would be present in the service to hear it. The same assumption can be found in Colossians 3:20, where we read, "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord."

Because of the bibles clear teaching on this issue you will see the absence of age-graded ministries at Bethel Church. This is intentional on our part. While there may be times for children to be gathered together in order to be taught; similarly with teens, there is no specifically segregated youth or children's ministries here as we do not find such terms as "children's minister" or "youth pastor" in the Bible. The very concept is extra-biblical.

It has been well said that parents who are relieved of their discipleship duties tend to become dependent on those who have taken over the job. Instead, the Bible clearly teaches that Christian parents (rather than the Church) have the responsibility of providing their children a solid foundation in the things of God. Parents (especially fathers) are to discipline and train their children.

RAISING FAMILY SHEPHERDS

In Psalm 78:5-7 we read, "He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments."

Ephesians 6:4 says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

We wish to be clear here. Church ministry provides a vital role for the family. Yet it is a specific one in serving the family by training parents to bring up their children in the things of God. Churches should teach fathers how to be family shepherds. Rather than placing the burden of children's and youth ministry on a few "paid professionals," churches are to equip parents to teach, train, disciple and evangelize their children. The parents' responsibility in discipling their children is a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week assignment from the Lord. It is an entire way of life.

Speaking to parents, Deuteronomy 6 says, “You shall teach them (God’s words) diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”

Scripture holds out the privilege that parents have to facilitate their children worshipping God by modeling this themselves. Children cannot fail to notice parents singing hymns to God with their whole hearts, the bowing of heads in reverence while in prayer, the earnestness involved in the reciting of an historic creed of the church, as well as the very close attention given to the hearing of the word of God as it is read and when it is preached. Children also know the difference between an act of duty and an act of delight, even if they are not able to articulate the difference themselves. Joy in God is contagious. God can do much in the heart of a child when true worship is modeled before them.

Parents can also ask questions of their children after the service is over, and explain anything that was unclear or not understood. It can become an amazing opportunity to teach the great doctrines of the faith, on a level the child can absorb, in spite of the fact that many things went over the child’s head in the service. Parents can ask “what were you thinking when we did this in the service?” and by their answer, find out immediately the perceptions of the child. Then the parent can explain things and point to the Bible as to why we did what we did in the service. Great learning can occur in such moments, especially when this kind of parental/child interaction becomes a regular habit in this way.

DISRUPTIONS HAPPEN

As a church adapts to children being present throughout the worship service all of us are in training. The congregation needs to grasp the fact that children are not perfect, nor will they be. Congregational awareness is a vitally important component in all of this. And yet, on the other hand, parents need to be sensitive also, if not more so. Parents should make sure that an entire service is not disrupted by the noise of a child.

With all this being understood, let us remember that our children are not merely the church of tomorrow, but the church of today. They are very precious to the Lord and to us. As we gather together on the Lord’s Day, may we worship God according to how He commands, not according to what may be popular in a particular culture and time.

May we stand in the tradition of Reformation faith and practice, gathering with God’s people each Lord’s Day to exult in God’s truth, thrill over His mercies and graces, and worship His magnificence out loud! As we do, may the Word of God be read, preached, prayed, sung and seen (in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper), for the edification of all of Christ’s precious sheep – young and old, men and women, parents and children, visibly, publicly, together.

APPENDIX D PHILOSOPHY AND VISION FOR CORPORATE WORSHIP:

Navigating the gravity and goodness of God's glory on Sunday morning

Worship is a dialogue between God and his people, a rhythm of divine revelation and human response. Which means all people were created to worship. Either they worship a false god by suppressing the truth and serving the creation (Romans 1:18-23) or they worship the true God in a wrong way offering strange fire (Numbers 3:4) or they worship the Father through the finished work of the Son in the power of the Spirit.

In worship God speaks to us through His Word; and we respond with our hearts, voices and bodies. The impartation of *theology* is not complete until it is answered with appropriate *doxology*. This pattern is seen throughout Scripture: God always acts first to reveal Himself and to reach out to man; all worship is a response to God's prior revealing

God has revealed Himself and His glory finally and sufficiently through the inspired Scriptures. (Psalm 138:1-2, Hebrews 1:1-2)

Definition of Worship: Worship is our satisfaction in God in the heart that is kindled through the mind and overflows into all of life.

Satisfaction in God will lead us to sing songs of his praise in our gatherings, and satisfaction in God will lead us to serve our city while suffering.

To the degree that we engage in these activities (singing and serving) apart from a satisfaction in God it leads to formalism in worship services and legalism in our obedience. The puritans called this light and heat, since God is a consuming fire we should experience both and in the correct order. The light of God's revelation should produce the heat of our affections.

Values that direct our corporate gathering:

- **God-centeredness**

We will place a high priority on the vertical focus of our Sunday morning gathering.

We will work to remove horizontal intrusions between vertical acts.

We will be intentional to choose songs that make much of God and not man.

We will strive to discern the moment to know when speaking or silence will most glorify and help us encounter God.

Announcements before the call to worship or after the benediction. Can scroll before and after service via powerpoint.

- **Christ-centeredness**

We believe the person and work of Jesus Christ is the central message of all 66 books of scripture. (types, themes, pictures, and prophecy)

In every Sunday gathering we will get to Christ to expose the reality of our sinfulness, to model our call to obedience and to rest in His perfect work on our behalf.

- **Bible-centeredness**

We recognize that the bible is the only ground for all our appeal to authority.

The bible will be the regulator for all we do in worship: Read the bible, Preach the bible, Pray the bible, Sing the bible, and See the bible (ordinances)

We are committed to expository preaching as foundational to all we do. Letting the word of God set the agenda for the people of God.

- **For the Believer**

We do not believe that the Sunday morning gathering is our primary contact point with unbelievers.

We will do much to be hospitable, we will do little to make people comfortable (seeker-sensitive) but we will do everything to make the gospel understandable.

- **Head and Heart**

True worship aims at kindling and carrying deep, strong, real emotions toward God, but does not manipulate people's emotions by failing to appeal to clear thinking about spiritual things based on biblical truth.

We will strive to hold these principles in balance to protect us from the difference between emotion and emotionalism; and between intellectual and intellectualism.

God is more glorified when known and enjoyed than either alone.

- **Reverence in Reality**

We will strive to avoid a trite, flippant, superficial, frivolous atmosphere, but in stead set an example of reverence and passion and wonder.

We recognize there is a difference between natural life-humor and contrived communication-humor.

Heaven and hell are stupendous realities that deserve a certain demeanor. We must allow the tone of the text/truth to determine the tone of the service.

- **Un-distracting Excellence**

We will try to sing and play and pray and preach in such a way that people's attention will not be diverted from the substance by shoddy ministry nor by excessive finesse, elegance, or refinement. Natural, un-distracting excellence will let the truth and beauty of God shine through.

Sound system, music playing, welcome and announcements, powerpoint slides, handing out bulletins, – all un-distracting from the aim of thinking about God.

We seek to avoid the flair of words/illustrations and chords that draw attention mainly to the performance and style and not the substance. Our methods must serve and be in submission to our purpose not contradict or overshadow the truth.

- **Congregational and inter-generational**

- We want to fight against any cultural adaptation to performance or spectating.
- We will place a high priority on corporate participation.
- We will work hard to engage people at all age and spiritual development levels in our gathering.

- **The Mingling of Historic and Contemporary Music**

No church worship gathering can be all things to all people. But at the same time we do not value stylistic narrowness. We believe there are affections owing to God that different tunes and different texts and different genres may awaken past and present.

APPENDIX E GOSPEL STRUCTURE:

The order and arrangement of our corporate worship gatherings are more than just a skeletal outline to keep us on track they also convey a gospel outworking. The components of our order of worship are arranged to lead us through the full experience of our Christian faith. From the revelation of God's glory to the recognition of our guilt to our relief in Christ's grace to our response of corporate gratitude.

Our order of worship consists of seven basic components. These components are not our invention but have their foundation in Scripture. Take for example Isaiah 6:1-13. Not only are they biblically grounded they have been historically practiced among those of the reformed faith. These components can be found in the orders of worship in the ministries of Martin Luther and John Calvin.

Revelation (Isaiah 6:1-3)

Each worship gathering begins with a reading from Scripture that highlights the character and work of God. God has revealed Himself in His word, and this self-revelation of God is our foundation from which everything is established.

Adoration (Isaiah 6:3)

Revelation leads us into adoration, or words of praise to God. Adoration is the expression of our love, honor, and joy in God as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. Adoration is exulting in God's immeasurable greatness. We do this through singing and Scripture reading.

Confession (Isaiah 6:5)

We cannot see the beauty and goodness of God without also seeing the ugliness of our sin. So adoration leads us into a time of confession. Confession is a time of meditation that focuses on our sin, guilt, and need of repentance. This happens through means of prayer, song, Scripture, or responsive reading.

Assurance (Isaiah 6:6)

Our guilt apart from God's grace would lead us to despair. We rest assured of our forgiveness by looking to the cross of Christ. During this time of assurance we focus on the sacrifice of God's Son, the propitiation of God's wrath, and our redemption through Jesus' blood. We assure ourselves of these truths by reciting the promises of God's word and singing songs that emphasize them.

Proclamation (Isaiah 6:8)

Proclamation is the regular, expository preaching of Scripture that seeks to unfold the whole counsel of God exposing the truth that all Scripture is about Jesus.

Supplication

After the preaching of God's word we see our need of God's help to obey the truth which drives us to prayer. Here our focus is praying for application concerning the word that was preached and bringing our corporate needs to the throne of grace.

Dedication (Isaiah 6:8)

After a time of prayer, we return to singing in response to God's truth, committing ourselves to Him and His ways.

APPENDIX F PHILOSOPHY OF ENGAGEMENT FOR MISSIONS

The Mandate

Matthew 28:16-20 states that all three persons of the Trinity are involved in making disciples of all nations (missions). The Father gives the authority for missions to the Son. The Son commissions the apostles (the Church). The Church baptizes new converts in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The authority given to the Son is “in heaven” and “on earth” and includes the nations being given to Christ as His possession (Psalm 2:8).

(v. 20) The church is to teach them no less than to observe all things that Jesus commanded. Thus, the church is to translate the Old and the New Testament into the languages of the people as needed. Missionaries must teach the whole counsel of God. The Gospel should not be diminished or altered in anyway concerning its content or its scope.

Mark 16:15-16 clearly states that the Gospel is to be taken into all the world and preached to every creature. The command to “go” is universal in its scope and directed to all peoples.

The preaching of the Gospel is accompanied by the covenantal promise that those who believe will be saved and the curse that those who do not believe will be lost (John 20:23). There is no other way to be saved except through the Son (John 14:6).

Preaching the Gospel results in men being reconciled with God and being “built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19-22). Being incorporated into the body of Christ, the Church, God’s people become a community in which the Trinity dwells and all things are made new.

The mandate or commission of Christ is accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit to the end of the age (Acts 1:8; 2; Matthew 28:20). Christ empowers His Church to extend into all nations. The Spirit enables the Church to accomplish her missionary commission. The church relies on God’s empowering and demonstrates her inability through prayer (Luke 10:2; Romans 15:30-33; Ephesians 6:18-20; Acts 1:14; 4:24-31).

The Method

1. The commission of discipling the nations (missions) is given to the Church of Jesus Christ. She is the proper and sole agent of missions.

The Bible prescriptively and descriptively sets forth the Church as being responsible for carrying out the work of missions.

2. The Church conducts this work primarily through her commissioned members and they are held accountable to her.

After Christ commissioned and sent out the first officers (Acts 1:8) we seem to see the same pattern followed (Acts 1:4-25; 13:1-4). The commissioned are accountable to the sending congregations (to Antioch: Acts 14:26-28; 15:30-35; 18:22-23. To Jerusalem Acts 15:1-5; 21:17-19).

3. The tools given the Church for her task are the Word and the Sacraments.

Preaching and the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper function as the primary method by which the nations are to be discipled. All other programs and para-church ministries must serve to enable the Church to accomplish her task.

4. The Office of the Believer.

Although the Church is to carry out her mission through her commissioned and sent members, non-commissioned members are not excluded. The New Testament gives us many examples of "fellow laborers" volunteering their time, gifts and resources (Luke 19:29-34; 22:9-13; 23:50-56; Acts 16:14-15; 19:29; 20:4; Romans 16:3; Philippians 4:2-3). Such "fellow laborers" can serve both here and abroad.

5. The important relationship between "Word" and "Deed."

The preaching of the Word is often accompanied by deeds of mercy. While there are examples of the preaching of the Word in the New Testament without a record of diaconal deeds of mercy (Acts 2:14-39; 14:1-7), there are no examples of the practice of deeds of mercy independent of the ministry of the Word (Acts 3; 14:8-18). Thus, the Word must have preeminence in the mission of the Church, though never to the exclusion of deeds of mercy.

The Mechanics: Joint Venture Model

While the local church remains the calling, the commissioning, and the primary administering body for missions, Bethel Church is willing to cooperate in the sending of missionaries through a representative model.

In this model, the local church sends out the missionary. A mission committee of the sending church holds the missionary accountable and helps advise them. Sister churches, who have the right to send a representative to the sending church's mission committee, send funds to the missionary through the missionary's sending church.

Summary Statement:

In light of the above, Bethel Church's mission strategy will give priority to the following criteria in choosing what missions work to support:

- Commissioned missionaries of Bethel Church held accountable to their Council of Elders.

- Commissioned Bethel Church missionaries and members trained up by Bethel Church sent to be involved in activities that directly relate to, or support, the ministry of Word and Sacraments.
 - Mission work that is either a Bethel church planting effort or connected to one.
 - Missions that are connected to other like-minded churches.
 - Missions that are long-term or mid-term in nature.
 - Mission work that is achievable, sustainable (including the oversight of the missionary), and most likely to be self-perpetuating.
 - Parachurch organizations that consciously recognize the centrality of the Church and in practice defer to her authority (e.g. through cooperative agreements, etc).
 - Members who are working with the elders in exploring their call to missions.
- All other things being equal, priority will be given to taking the Gospel to where it has not yet been preached.