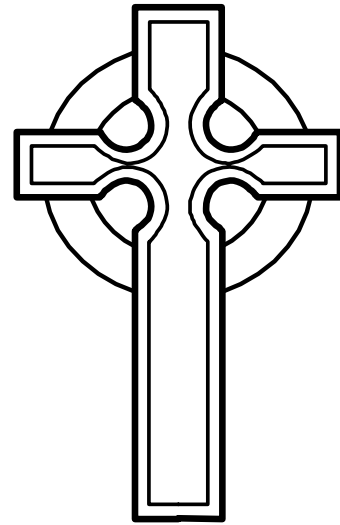


PROVIDENCE Reformed Bible Church

101 Westridge Dr.
West Monroe, LA 71291
Phone: 318-235-4721
Website: www.prbc.cc

Sunday Schedule
9:30 AM Bible Study
10:30 AM Worship Service



CONSTITUTION OF PROVIDENCE REFORMED BIBLE CHURCH OF WEST MONROE, LOUISIANA

PREAMBLE

We, the members of the Providence Reformed Bible Church of West Monroe, do ordain and establish the following articles, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this church shall be Providence Reformed Bible Church.

ARTICLE II - 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 edifying His saints, and by evangelizing sinners. Therefore, we are committed to the proclamation of God's perfect Law and of the glorious Gospel of His grace, 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 III – COVENANT

A. Introductory Statement

God has graciously entered into a covenant relationship with His believing people. Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant. His blood is the blood of the New Covenant, which infallibly secures all the benefits of the covenant for all of God's people. God has in this New Covenant made us members one of another. Therefore, we have covenant responsibilities to each other, as well as to God. God has promised in this covenant to write His laws in our hearts and to cause us to walk in His ways (that is, to enable us to keep our covenant responsibilities). The motivation and ability to obey God's laws spring from the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who, by His death, satisfied the holy wrath of God that was against us due to our sins. It is by the enablement of the Holy Spirit that we obey, in loving gratitude for Christ's righteousness, which has been imputed to us, and not to establish our own righteousness before God. We obey with the confidence that the end of Christ's death will be realized in us (that is, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" and that we should be a people "zealous of good works"). The following paragraphs are a summary of what we believe are our covenant responsibilities toward God and toward one another. This summary forms the basis for our giving and receiving instruction for ourselves and for our families.

B. Summary of Our Covenant Responsibilities

By the grace of God we have been led to repent of our sin and believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. We have confessed our faith and been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Now, therefore, in the presence of God and by His grace, we joyfully and solemnly enter into a holy covenant with the members of The Reformed Bible Church of West Monroe.

- a. We pledge to walk together in Christian love through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- b. We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but faithfully attend the church's meetings for worship, prayer, study, and fellowship, and will use our spiritual gifts for the common good.

- c. We pledge to faithfully participate in the ordinances of the church, and endeavor after unity of mind in doctrine. We will both submit to the church's discipline upon ourselves and lovingly assume our responsibility to participate in the discipline of other members, as taught in Scripture.
- d. We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to this church for its general ministry and expenses, the relief of the poor, the cause of reformation and revival, and the spread of the Gospel throughout all nations.
- e. We will strive by God's grace and power to live out a faithful Christian witness in the world; and denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we will seek to fulfill our calling to lead a holy life.
- f. We will strive to walk in accordance with God's law written on our hearts, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.
- g. We purpose to watch over one another in brotherly love, to remember one another in prayer, to help one another in sickness and distress, and to cultivate Christian compassion and courtesy.
- h. We will be slow to take offense, always eager to seek the reconciliation Christ commands, and will work to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- i. We resolve to practice personal and family worship, to train our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, and to seek the salvation of our family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, acquaintances, and of all the world.
- j. We promise that if, in the providence of God, we leave this church we will diligently seek to unite with another church where we can continue to carry out the spirit and principles of God's Word.

ARTICLE IV - CONFESSION OF FAITH

We agree with and accept as our doctrinal standard the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689, which we judge to be an accurate and helpful summary of Christian doctrine. However, as its first chapter declares, "the supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined.... and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved."

ARTICLE V – GOVERNMENT

Jesus Christ alone is the Head of this and every true church. He has ordained that individual churches should be governed through office bearers whom He calls, who are endowed by His Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work. Those who have been called of God to rule and teach in the church are called elders, pastors, or overseers. These are three interchangeable names designating one and the same office in New Testament church. The elders are responsible for the oversight and government of the flock of God. Therefore, this church's form of government shall be rule by elders.

ARTICLE VI – MEMBERSHIP

A. Requirements for Membership

1. To be eligible for membership, a person must demonstrate repentance toward God and the fruits thereof, as well as that faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ which produces godly works. The demonstration of these realities naturally requires observation over a period of time. The duration of this time shall be determined by the elders on a case by case basis.
2. He must have been baptized by immersion after exercising faith in Christ.
3. He must also profess voluntary, informed, and substantial agreement with the purpose (as stated in Article II), covenant (as stated in Article III), confession (as stated in Article IV), and government (as stated in Article V) of this church. Substantial agreement is that which satisfies the elders that there is such like-mindedness as to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Anyone who is in basic disagreement with the purpose, constitution, confession and/or government of the church could not be consistently submissive to the church's teaching ministry. Therefore, to admit such a person to membership in this church would be unwise, divisive, and unscriptural.

B. Reception into Membership

The following procedure shall be followed for those desiring membership in Providence Reformed Bible Church of West Monroe:

1. Any person desiring to become a member of the church must participate in membership classes, in which the basic teachings and practices of the church, and responsibilities and commitments of members, are explained.
2. Upon completion of these classes, an individual must submit a written testimony to the elders explaining his understanding and experience of the Gospel of Christ. The twofold purpose of the written testimony is to enable present members to have proper spiritual discernment concerning potential members and to enjoy knowledgeable fellowship with them.
3. If the applicant is, or has been, a member of another church, special effort will be made to determine his standing in that church and his reasons for leaving. At the discretion of the elders, a letter of inquiry concerning the person's standing may be sent to that church before his acceptance as a member in this church is determined.

4. Upon the reception of any written testimony, the elders may at their discretion ask for a preliminary meeting with the applicant. Otherwise, the name of the applicant shall be announced for at least three consecutive Lord's Days at stated meetings of the church. This time period is for the purpose of enabling the members to read his testimony and to raise any questions or objections concerning the applicant's qualifications. Members are expected to consider this a personal duty of the most serious character, and to voice to the elders all questions or objections that are not resolved through personal contact with the applicant.
5. After at least three consecutive Lord's Days, the applicant will meet with a majority of the elders. During the interview, the elders will seek to clarify any questions the applicant may have concerning the church or church membership. They shall also determine whether or not that person meets the qualifications as stated in Article VI, Section A, of the Constitution and, if necessary, resolve any questions or objections raised by the church. The elders may postpone the reception of the person into membership until proper investigation can be made into any objections that are not resolved at that time.
6. If the elders are satisfied that the applicant meets the qualifications, the person will be publicly received the next Lord's Day.

C. Termination of Membership

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 Removal to another Faithful Church.**
 - a. There are times in the providence of God that members will relocate to a new geographical location. Members are strongly urged to ensure the safety of their souls by seeking out a faithful church before such relocation is carried out. When it is so requested, a letter of commendation may be sent to the church the member wishes to join. 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 commendation 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.
 - b. The membership of any member who has relocated will not be maintained in this local assembly beyond a six month period, but will be terminated. The reason for this is twofold: 1) To preserve the integrity and meaning of Biblical church membership, and 2) To enforce upon the conscience of a departing member the seriousness and vital importance of joining himself to a faithful assembly in his new locale.
3. **By Resignation**
 - a. Occasionally, a member whose conduct does not warrant corrective discipline and who is in good standing in the church may request termination of his membership. Resignation may be warranted for the following reasons: 1) a member in good standing may conclude that he is not truly saved; or 2) a member in good standing may wish to terminate his membership for reasons that do not impugn his Christian profession.
 - b. Because membership in Providence Reformed Bible Church is entered into jointly, members cannot unilaterally terminate their membership. Any member desiring to resign, therefore, must submit a request for termination of membership in writing to the elders.
 - c. If, after due admonition, the elders conclude that the resignation is warranted, a letter shall be sent granting the requested termination. No congregational approval shall be needed for resignation. The elders shall simply communicate to the congregation that such a person is no longer a member. If one who has resigned again applies for membership, the normal procedures shall be followed as set forth in Section B of this Article.
4. **By Excommunication.**
According to the teaching of Holy Scripture, a congregation must cut off from its fellowship and visible membership any person who teaches or insists on holding to false and/or heretical doctrine; who blatantly or persistently conducts himself in a manner inconsistent with his Christian profession; who knowingly speaks against the church Covenant, Confession of Faith; who persists in disturbing the unity or peace of the church. The procedure to be followed in such excommunication is set forth in Article VII, Section B.2, of this Constitution.

D. Expectation of Members

Each member of this church is expected to live in accordance with the covenant of the church, which covenant he has committed to keep between God and his brethren. When a member consistently disregards his covenant vows, he will be exhorted by the elders and, if necessary, disciplined according to the nature of the offense. This is necessary to the maintaining of the integrity of the church, and the significance and meaning of those vows which we have made before God and one another. The expectations below reflect our commitment as a congregation to walk faithfully before the Lord as His disciples.

1. All the members of this church are obligated to attend all the stated meetings of the church unless providentially hindered by illness, unusual working conditions, or other such circumstances. When any member is absent from any stated meeting, it is the member's duty that an elder be informed directly or

indirectly of the reason. The dictates of biblical love, Christian courtesy, and biblical order demand that this be so.

2. All the members of the church are required to make use of the various other means of grace that are available to them, such as daily reading of the Bible, daily private and family worship, and a proper reverence for and observance of the Lord's Day.
3. Because it is clearly taught in the Scriptures that Christians should financially support the work of the Lord by systematic and proportionate giving made through the local church, the giving ten percent of one's income is strongly urged upon each member as an expression of worship and is the Biblical norm for basic giving. Added to this should be gifts and offerings according to one's ability and the willingness of his heart.
4. All the members of this church are required to obey the teachings of Scripture in respect to family life and government. The husband is the God-appointed head of the family and must rule his household with gentleness, love, wisdom, and firmness. The wife must be in Scriptural subjection to her husband in all things. The husband and wife must bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Single believers must keep themselves pure in this immoral age and give themselves only to a godly, spiritually maturing, believer. In the event of believers who are widowed or divorced, the church will seek to provide the comfort and aid due them, particularly in the raising of children who are fatherless or motherless.
5. It is the duty of every Christian, as an individual and as a member of a local church, to labor by prayer, word, and deed for the extension of the kingdom of God in ever widening circles beginning at home and stretching forth to the ends of the earth.
6. Each member of the church is required to render loyal obedience to all the moral precepts of God's Word in his daily life. If God has not condemned or forbidden a practice in His Word, a Christian is at liberty to participate in it. The exercise of Christian liberty, however, must at all times be governed by an earnest desire to walk in the fear of God and to glorify Him in all things, a loving regard for the consciences of weaker brethren, a compassion for the lost, and a zealous regard for the health of one's own soul.
7. We who have been joined to Christ by faith and are members of this church are also members one of another. With this privileged relationship come particular responsibilities. We must maintain mutual transparency and honesty. We must rejoice in each other's honor and bear one another's sorrows. We must discreetly confess our faults one to another. We must mutually oversee each other, faithfully admonish and encourage one another, and avoid all backbiting and gossip. Also, we must, when necessary, help meet the material needs of our brethren.

E. Status of Members

The elders shall keep a record of all past and present members. This file shall have three divisions by households: members in good standing, members not in good standing, and former members. The file of former members shall include the date and reason church membership was terminated, as well as any other necessary information (see Article VI, Section C). Members in good standing shall constitute the total voting membership of the church for the purposes specified in this Constitution.

ARTICLE VII - CHURCH DISCIPLINE

A. Formative Discipline

Every disciple of Christ must be under His discipline (His instruction and correction, which is administered to each one through the church). Mutual submission to one another and to the eldership which the Lord has set over His church will result in the sanctification of each member individually and of the whole body of the church collectively. There are occasions, however, when one's failure to respond to this formative discipline makes the application of corrective discipline necessary.

B. Corrective Discipline

1. Public Reproof and Suspension of Privileges

- a. Some kinds of conduct and doctrine may be categorized as "disorderly." Such conduct indicates that "a soldier of Christ's army is out of step". It is really sinful. Disorderly conduct, however, is to be distinguished from conduct that is actually "traitorous." As such, a disorderly member is not to be immediately excommunicated if he does not respond to counsel. Rather, privileges of membership are suspended, in accordance with the directions of 2 Thes 3:6-15 wherein fellowship is withdrawn from him, but he is "counted not as an enemy, but admonished as a brother" that "he may be ashamed" and repent. The privileges removed include any leadership or teaching roles within the church, participation in the Lord's Supper, and voting privileges.
- b. Public Reproof consists of a pastoral effort, before the gathered church, to call an impenitent church member to repentance. Those who humbly receive the word of public reproof, own and confess their sin, and manifest a transformed life shall afterward be publicly commended for their godly repentance, and returned to the privileges of membership. If the reproof is not heeded, further discipline may be imposed.
- c. Suspension of privileges may be enacted at a congregational meeting by the church in conjunction with public reproof, and upon the recommendation of the elders. To be valid, an act of suspension must have the approval of a majority of the member households in good standing present. The elders may bar any

member from the Lord's Table on account of disorderly or immoral conduct until the matter can be discussed at a congregational meeting.

2. *Excommunication*

- a. Some kinds of conduct and doctrine are not merely disorderly, but are actually traitorous to the cause of Christ. A member guilty of such conduct or doctrine must be cut off from the fellowship of the church. Before such action is taken, earnest efforts must be made to bring the offender to repentance. If these efforts fail, this offender is to be excommunicated, at a congregational meeting, by the church. To be valid, an act of excommunication must have the recommendation of the elders and the approval of a simple majority of the member households in good standing present.

There are, however, actions which are in and of themselves so scandalous and heinous as to warrant the excommunication of the offending party, whether hopeful signs of repentance are seen or not. These actions bring such great reproach to the church that for the sake of its purity and testimony, as well as the danger of its leavening influence, the course of excommunication is warranted.

- b. A suspended member shall be excommunicated if he continues impenitent.

3. *Restoration*

The purposes of church discipline are to restore a fallen brother or sister and to keep the church pure. Therefore, it is the duty of the church to forgive and to restore to full membership a suspended or excommunicated member who gives satisfactory evidence of his repentance. This shall be done in a duly convened business meeting called by the elders of the church and by a two-thirds majority of the member households in good standing present.

ARTICLE VIII – ORDINANCES

A. General Statement

There are two ordinances of special significance that our Lord has commanded us to observe: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are special "means of grace" and powerful aids to the faith of the believers who participate in them.

B. Baptism

Only confessed disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ are proper candidates for Baptism, and all such persons should be baptized and joined to a local church. Believing that Baptism is the God-ordained sign of one's personal union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and the door of entrance into the visible community of the people of God, we shall receive into the membership of the church only those who have been baptized in the Biblical manner, which is by immersion and "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Because baptism is the door of entrance into the visible community of the people of God, only those who are capable of maturely and intelligently assuming the responsibilities and liabilities of church membership are to be baptized. Not all who are truly converted and joined to the Lord Jesus (i.e., children making a good profession of faith) are ready for these responsibilities.

C. The Lord's Supper

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 broken 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 determine that only those who are biblically qualified and are able to take the elements in a worthy manner are admitted to the Table.

ARTICLE IX - CHURCH OFFICERS

A. Appointment of Church Officers

1. General Statement

- a. There are two offices in the church, elders and deacons. The calling of elders and deacons is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. However, He has ordained that each local church exercise the responsibility of recognizing those whom He has called to be elders and deacons in that particular church. The number of officers shall not be fixed. The church shall set apart men for each office according to the qualifications for that office and the need of the congregation.
- b. Elders and deacons are ordained to office by the laying on of hands by the eldership. This is an expression of approval for which the elders are responsible. Therefore, each office bearer must have the approval, not only of the church as a whole, but of the eldership in particular.
- c. The Lord's calling 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 office bearers is a matter of such importance that it should never be dealt with without much prayerful waiting upon God, an honest perusal of the relevant passages of Scripture, and a frank evaluation of those who are being considered. Each member of the congregation has a spiritual responsibility to be intelligently informed regarding these matters.

2. Procedure of Appointment

The recognition of those whom the Lord has called to bear office in this church is executed in four steps: nomination, congregational evaluation, appointment, and ordination.

a. Nomination

The elders shall nominate to office the men who in their judgment are qualified and called for that office and have the general support of the member households. Upon nominating such a man, the Scriptural qualifications for the office shall be clearly laid before the people.

b. Evaluation by the Congregation

After a man has been nominated to the office of elder or deacon, the congregation shall be charged with the responsibility to carefully consider his life and doctrine in light of the Biblical qualifications for a period of at least three months. Any concerns about the candidate should be expressed to him and, if not resolved, to the elders as well. Any commendation or concern expressed to the elders must be put in writing and signed by the member expressing such concern. As well, during this period, the elders shall seek to canvass the people regarding the qualifications of the man put forth for office.

c. Appointment by the Elders

If, at any time, concerns are raised such that the elders determine the person is not qualified for the office, they shall announce and explain his removal from consideration. However, if in the evaluation of the elders no such disqualifying concerns are evident, and the period of evaluation has confirmed the man as qualified for the office, he shall be appointed to that office by the elders of the church.

d. Ordination

Following the appointment of an office bearer there shall be a portion of a regular worship service set aside at which time the office bearer shall be ordained by the laying on of the hands of the eldership. This solemn act should always be accompanied by the special prayers of the whole church.

B. Elders

1. Anyone desiring the office of an elder must evidence to God's people the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications that are set forth in the Scriptures. In order that this evidence secures the confidence of the congregation, substantial time shall be afforded for the man and his family to properly gain their confidence.
2. Elders must seek to discharge their duties as set forth in the Scriptures.
3. While elders are overseers of the flock, they are themselves members of the flock. Therefore, each individual elder is under the oversight of his fellow elders and is subject to the same discipline as are all the other members of the church (see Review of Office Bearers below).
4. Every elder has equal rule in the church, though gifts possessed and functions performed will vary from elder to elder. Elders will be maintained in material necessities and disentangled from the cares of another vocation according to their gifts, the needs and capability of the church, and the direction of Christ her Head.
5. Anyone called to this office must be able to conscientiously affirm his agreement with the church's Confession of Faith and Constitution. If he should at any time move from this position, he would be under spiritual and moral obligation to immediately make that fact known to the church in an orderly manner.

C. Deacons

Deacons are responsible primarily to administer the benevolent concerns of the church as well as its business affairs. They must fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with, and in subjection to, the elders.

D. Review of Office Bearers

Though a plurality of elders and of deacons is the New Testament norm for every church, the New Testament does not specify the number of elders or deacons each church should have, nor does it dictate the length of an officer's term of office. One truly called to this office is usually called to it for life. He is a gift of Christ to the church, and the gifts of God are without repentance. Only when an officer fails to meet the necessary Scriptural qualifications for his office does he disqualify himself from being an elder or deacon. An officer may request to be temporarily relieved from the responsibilities of his office for a time if he is providentially hindered from properly discharging his responsibilities. If the elders determine that his qualifications are not in question, and that such a leave of absence is needed, they must establish a specific time after which the officer's case will be discussed by the elders to insure that he is qualified and fit to resume his responsibilities.

There may arise occasions in which an office bearer's qualifications are brought into question. On such occasions, the elders (or the other elders, in the case of an elder) are required to carefully consider any confirmed concern regarding such an officer, and publicly rebuke and/or remove him as the situation requires. As well, a congregational meeting to discuss an officer's qualifications may be called by written request of one-half of member households. Concerns expressed at such a meeting must be prayerfully pondered by the eldership, and responded to publicly at a duly called church business meeting.

If a two-thirds majority of the congregation households in good standing lack confidence in the totality of the eldership, and expresses so in writing, the input and counsel of other like minded churches will be sought according to the statement of our confession (chapter 26, paragraph 15).

ARTICLE X - OFFICIAL BOARD

In order to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," this church shall have an official Board of Trustees. The official board shall consist of elders and deacons as voting members with the chairmanship rotating among the elders. Officers of the board shall serve as the legal representatives of the church.

ARTICLE XI - CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

A. Moderating

All business meetings of the church shall be moderated by the Chairman of the Board of Trustees. In his absence, the Chairman may designate another elder to serve as Moderator.

B. Calling of Meetings

There shall be an annual business meeting of the church held in January or February. At the annual meeting reports shall be given by the elders and the deacons.

C. Special Meetings

Congregational meetings may be called by the elders, or when one-half of the voting member households in good standing make a written request for such a meeting. This request must state the reason for the meeting, be signed by one-half of the member household in good standing, and must be presented to the elders, who shall in turn make the proper announcement of the meeting. Every congregational meeting at which business is to be transacted shall be announced at regular services for at least two successive Lord's Days. Other congregational meetings at which there is no business transacted by vote may be called at the discretion of the elders without previous notice.

D. Voting

All members should regard their presence at a duly called congregational meeting with the same seriousness with which they would regard their attendance at a stated service of worship. It shall be our goal to prayerfully discern the mind of God so that in all matters of church business it may be said of us, as it was said of that church business meeting recorded in Acts 6, that this thing "pleased the whole multitude." However, in situations in which this unanimity is not realized, no less than a two-thirds majority of those member households in good standing voting will make a resolution valid.

ARTICLE XII - AMENDMENTS

Amendments to this Constitution may be adopted by the recommendation of the elders and affirmed by three-fourths of member households in good standing voting at any regular congregational meeting or at a special meeting called for this purpose, provided, in either case, that such proposed amendments shall be distributed in written form to the membership at least four weeks prior to such a meeting.

*Special thanks is given to the Reformed Baptist Church of Louisville, Kentucky, whose constitution was taken as a model and adapted for PRBC's needs. The reader will find whole sections copied from RBC Louisville's Constitution.