



**ARLINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH**  
ASSEMBLE, BELIEVE, CONNECT

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# CHURCH CONSTITUTION

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FEBRUARY 18, 2024  
ARLINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH  
106 Main St S, Arlington, South Dakota 57212

# Constitution of Arlington Baptist Church

## Preamble

As born-again, Bible-believing Christians, with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we recognize the Bible as the divinely inspired and authoritative guide for all Christian faith and practice. We commit ourselves to growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ through worship and service. Our aim is to spread the Word of God both locally and globally, and to earnestly contend for the faith as instructed in Jude 3. In our endeavors, we strive to ensure that “all things might be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40). Therefore, we unite as a congregation of baptized believers in Jesus Christ, and resolve to be governed by this Constitution, which represent our faith and outline the principles for the management of our local church.

## Article 1- Name

This independent Baptist church shall be known as Arlington Baptist Church of Arlington, South Dakota. The date of the constitution revision is February 18, 2024, and the incorporation is May 16, 2022.

## Article 2- Purpose

The primary purpose of this church is to bring honor and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe the best way to accomplish this is through:

- \*worshipping in Spirit and Truth, worship goes beyond mere acts; it is a state of the heart and a way of living that recognizes and responds to the glory and sovereignty of God. (John 4:24)
- \*proclaiming the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in efforts to evangelize the unconverted (Mark 16:15)
- \*educating new believers and edifying established Saints through Biblical teaching and preaching (Matthew 28:19-20; Ephesians 4:12)
- \*building and establishing other independent Baptist churches- locally and through giving of missions (Acts 1:8; Romans 10:14-15)
- \*enriching our community by declaring the light of truth and providing support through benevolent service, ministering to the “*least of these*” (Matthew 25:45; James 2:15-16)

Through these endeavors, we seek to fulfill our divine calling, always keeping our eyes fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith.

## Article 3- Statement of Faith

### *1. The Holy Scriptures*

**Authority and Sufficiency:** We believe the Holy Bible, encompassing both the Old and New Testaments as originally written, is of the utmost authority and sufficiency. Believing it to be verbally inspired and plenary given, it is the product of men who were moved by the Holy Spirit, rendering it infallible and inerrant. As the ultimate authority, it is sufficient and complete, requiring no addition or amendment. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-25; 1 Corinthians 14:33; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13; Matthew 5:18)

**Standard of Truth and Unity:** We believe the Bible stands as the true center of Christian unity and the supreme standard against which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions are to be measured. Its timeless teachings are universally applicable to all aspects of life, serving as the definitive guide for faith and practice. (Psalm 119:105; John 17:17; James 1:22)

**Interpretation and Dispensations:** We believe that a natural, literal interpretation of the Scripture reveals

distinct dispensations or divine administrative orders throughout history. These are different ways in which God manages humanity, dealing differently with people in various times according to His sovereign will. Notably, the three primary dispensations — the Age of the Law, the Age of the Church, and the Age of the Kingdom — are each specifically detailed and unfolded within the Scriptures. (Ephesians 3:2-5; Hebrews 1:1-2; 1 Corinthians 9:17)

During our services, Arlington Baptist Church maintains unanimity by using the King James Version for all teaching and preaching activities.

## *2. God*

We believe in the one true God, eternally existing in three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Each person is fully God, sharing in every divine perfection, yet executing distinct and harmonious roles. The Father decrees redemption, the Son secures it through His life, death, and resurrection, and the Holy Spirit applies it by imparting new life, sanctifying, and empowering believers. The concept of one God is declared in Deuteronomy 6:4, while the distinct personhoods within God — the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — are affirmed in Matthew 28:19. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; John 14:7-12; John 16:7; 2 Corinthians 13:14)

## *3. Jesus Christ and His Second Coming*

We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who became flesh, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. As fully God and fully man, He lived a sinless life, revealing God's character and fulfilling the divine plan of redemption for sinful humanity. Through His sacrificial death on the cross and His bodily resurrection, He made atonement for our sin and secured our eternal salvation. After ascending to Heaven, He now sits at the right hand of the Father as our High Priest, Intercessor, and Advocate. (John 1:1,14; Luke 1:35; Hebrews 4:15; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 9:14, 10:12; Romans 3:24-25; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Acts 1:9; Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34)

We believe in our blessed hope in His imminent return, known as the Rapture, where Christ will meet believers in the air. This event signifies the gathering of the Church and is distinct from His visible second coming. Following the Rapture, a period known as the Tribulation will occur on earth. At the end of this period, Christ will return visibly to establish His millennial reign, a period of peace and righteousness, where He will reign as King with His saints on earth. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; Matthew 24:21; Revelation 7:14; Revelation 19:11-16; Revelation 20:4-6)

We believe after the millennial reign, the Great White Throne Judgment will take place, and a new heaven and new earth are established. In this new creation, all of God's redeemed will dwell with the triune God in eternal glory, free from sin, suffering, and death. (Revelation 20:11-15; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-4; Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:27; Revelation 22:3-5)

## *4. The Holy Spirit*

We believe the Holy Spirit is a person, equal with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, transforms new believers, baptizes all believers into the body of Christ, seals the believer, and assists the believer in understanding Scripture. We believe that certain spiritual gifts, such as apostleship, prophecy, and speaking in tongues, were specific to the early Church's formative period and are not expected in the present day. These gifts served a temporary purpose during the infancy of the Church. We also believe that the Holy Spirit consistently bears witness to Jesus Christ and does not lead anyone in a way that contradicts the teachings of the Bible. (John 3:8; 14:16; 15:26-27; 16:7-15; Acts 5:1-4; 1 Corinthians 12:4-13; 13:8-11; Ephesians 4:30; 5:18).

## 5. Creation

We believe the Genesis account of creation faithfully narrates God's direct and sovereign act over six literal days, each consisting of twenty-four hours. Orchestrated by the triune God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — this divine work brought forth the heavens and the earth. God's creative acts were immediate and comprehensive, reflecting His omnipotent and omniscient nature. Consequently, we reject the theory of evolution, the Day-Age Theory, Theistic evolution, and the Gap theory, affirming that all aspects of creation, visible and invisible, were intentionally and uniquely crafted by God's command. (Genesis 1:1; Exodus 20:11; Psalm 33:6-9; John 1:1-3; Hebrews 11:3; Colossians 1:16-17; Nehemiah 9:6; Job 38:4-7)

## 6. Satan

We believe the existence and distinct personality of Satan, known as the Devil. Created as an angelic being by God, he succumbed to pride and rebellion, transforming into an adversary against his Creator and all creation. As the malevolent ruler of this world's darkness, he orchestrates the forces of evil and moral decay. However, his destiny is irrevocably set toward eternal damnation in the lake of fire ensuring the ultimate justice and the triumph of God's righteousness. (Ezekiel 28:12-15; Isaiah 14:12-15; John 8:44; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 12:9; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10)

## 7. The Total Depravity of Man

We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God, but in Adam's sin, humanity fell and incurred not only physical death but also spiritual death, which is separation from God. As a result, all mankind has inherited a sinful nature, becoming willful sinners with the first expression of personal choice, and are totally unable to regain their former position. Consequently, humanity faces just condemnation without excuse before God, as we are inherently sinful and have deviated from our created purpose and holiness (Genesis 1:26; 3:1-24; Romans 1:20; 3:23; 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-6, 12).

## 8. Salvation, Regeneration, and Eternal Security

**Salvation as a Gift of God:** We believe that salvation is a divine gift from God, bestowed through grace and accepted through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ's sacrifice on Calvary, where His blood was shed, provides forgiveness of sins. This salvation is exclusively through faith in Jesus Christ and, being a gift, cannot be attained by any form of personal works. All who accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior are reborn and become children of God (Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-9; John 1:12; 3:5-7).

**Regeneration:** We believe the Scriptures declare that regeneration, or the new birth (being "*born again*"), is a transformation of the soul brought about by the Holy Spirit. This change imparts a new nature and spiritual life previously absent, making the individual a new creation in Christ Jesus. (John 3:3-6; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Peter 1:23; Titus 3:5).

**Eternal Security of the Believer:** We believe in the eternal security of every believer from the moment of regeneration. This perpetual security is assured by the gift of eternal life, the protective power of God, the Holy Spirit's sealing ministry, and Christ's intercessory work. Thus, the believer's salvation is secure for eternity (John 5:24; 10:27-30; Romans 8:1, 29-30, 38-39; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25).

## 9. Repentance, Justification, and Adoption

**Repentance - A Change Towards Holiness:** We believe that repentance is a vital element of salvation, a change of mind and heart that leads away from sin and towards holiness. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, it involves a recognition of and remorse for sin, resulting in a reorientation of life to follow Christ. This godly sorrow for sin is inseparably linked to genuine faith and leads to spiritual transformation (Luke 13:1-3; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Acts 20:21).

**Justification - God's Declaration of Righteousness:** We believe that justification is the divine act of God declaring sinners righteous solely through faith in Christ Jesus. It involves the pardon of sin and the imputation of God's righteousness, not by our works but through the redemptive power of Jesus' sacrifice. This act is the

judicial response of God to our faith, positioning us in *just* standing before Him (Acts 13:39; Romans 5:9; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

**Adoption - The Privilege of Sonship:** We believe that adoption is a gracious act of God whereby believers are received into the family of God as mature sons and daughters, for Christ's sake. This status, distinct from regeneration, bestows the full rights and inheritance of children of God, promising a future of complete glorification with Him. As adopted children, we are assured of our place in God's family and a relationship with Him that is permanent and intimate (Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 8:1; 1 John 3:1-2).

## 10. Sanctification

**Immediate, Positional Sanctification:** We believe that immediate, positional sanctification is the divine act wherein believers are eternally set apart as God's own at the time of salvation. This act of redemption places them within God's family as His children and co-heirs with Jesus Christ, signifying a permanent spiritual status (1 John 3:1; Romans 8:14-17; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Hebrews 10:10-14).

**Progressive Sanctification:** We believe that progressive sanctification is the ongoing process by which believers are made partakers of God's holiness. Initiated at salvation, this process advances as believers yield to the Holy Spirit. It is fostered in the hearts of believers through the Holy Spirit's presence and power, engagement with God's Word, self-examination, vigilance, and prayer (1 Thessalonians 4:3; 5:23; Proverbs 4:18; 1 John 2:29; Philippians 2:12-13; Ephesians 6:18; John 17:17).

**Ultimate Sanctification:** We believe that ultimate sanctification will be realized by every believer in the Lord's presence. This final state includes a complete and whole existence, with soul and spirit united in a resurrected body, entirely free from the influence or effects of sin and rebellion (1 John 3:2; 1 Corinthians 15:52-54; Ephesians 4:30; 5:27; Philippians 3:20-21).

## 11. The Eternal State

We believe that the souls of those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation immediately enter the Lord's presence upon death. There, they experience conscious bliss in heaven until the resurrection of the body at Christ's meeting in the air (rapture). At that time, the soul and uncorrupted body will reunite and be in eternal glory with Him. Conversely, the souls of unbelievers remain in conscious misery after death in hell until the final judgment of the Great White Throne at the end of the millennium reign. Then, their souls and bodies will reunite and be cast into the lake of fire, away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power (Luke 16:19-26; 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 20:11-15; 14:9-14; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

## 12. The Church

**The Local Church:** We believe the Church, as the Body of Christ established on Pentecost, consists solely of born-again and baptized believers. It manifests globally yet operates through local congregations governed by their own members under Christ's lordship and pastoral leadership. These local churches faithfully adhere to Christ's ordinances, uphold His teachings, and independently practice ministries, maintaining independence from external authority. While local churches may cooperate for common goals, each maintains ultimate authority over its decisions, reflecting the absolute supremacy of Christ as the only Head of the Church. The local church, as a congregation of believers, is committed to the mission of witnessing Christ faithfully. (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 20:28-32; Titus 1:5-11; Ephesians 5:23; Eph. 3:1-6; 1 Cor. 12:12,13; Acts 2:41,42; 1 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 1:22,23; 4:11; Acts 20:17-28; 1Tim. 3:1-7; Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23,24; Acts 15:13-18)

**Ordinances of the Church:** We believe there are two ordinances the church is to observe.

1. **Baptism:** We believe the mode of baptism is immersion in water and is reserved for those who profess their belief in Jesus Christ. It is carried out in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We believe that baptism is an act of obedience and a public declaration of faith, following Christ's command. It is not a means of salvation, nor does it contribute to one's salvation. Baptism symbolizes

the believer's identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (Matthew 28:19-20; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 8:36-37)

**2. The Lord's Supper:** We believe the Lord's Supper (also known as communion), is a solemn act of remembrance, not a conduit for salvation. It symbolizes the profound sacrifice of Jesus Christ and His crucifixion. This observance is an expression of shared faith and fellowship. In alignment with these principles, our church practices "close" communion where this observance is shared among our church members and like-minded believers.

- I. **A Memorial of Christ's Sacrifice:** The Lord's Supper is a commemorative act, remembering the death of Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice. It is not a sacrament that imparts saving grace but a symbolic act of obedience and remembrance.
- II. **Self-Examination and Reconciliation:** Prior to participating in the Lord's Supper, believers are encouraged to engage in self-examination and to reconcile any differences with others, ensuring they partake in a worthy manner.

(1 Corinthians 11:23-29; Luke 22:19-20; Matthew 26:26-28; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; Matthew 5:23-24; John 6:53-58)

### *13. Separation*

We believe the Biblical doctrine of separation, which is defined in three distinct aspects: First, the local church must remain separate from any affiliation or fellowship with groups or individuals who contradict the core truths of the faith as originally given to the saints. Second, every individual believer is called to distance themselves from worldly practices that could dishonor the Savior. Third, there is a clear distinction and separation between the church and the state. (2 Timothy 3:1-5; Romans 12:1-2; 14:13; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11; 2 Corinthians 6:11-7:1)

### *14. Missions*

We believe that missions are the heart of fulfilling the Great Commission, as commanded by Christ, to make disciples of all nations. This involves proclaiming the Gospel, establishing churches, and promoting Christian discipleship globally. Our commitment to missions is a direct response to the Biblical mandate, embodying our dedication to spreading God's message of salvation to every corner of the earth. It encompasses supporting, sending, and being actively involved in missionary endeavors, understanding the critical role of the church in extending God's kingdom. Our engagement in missions is not only an act of obedience but a privilege to partake in God's redemptive work through Jesus Christ. (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:14-15)

### *15. Biblical Marriage and Human Sexuality*

We believe the only legitimate sexual relationship, before God and man, is that of one biological male and one biological female who have been joined together in holy matrimony. We believe that all sexual activity outside that of a married man and woman is sin and condemned by the Word of God. We believe that a Biblical marriage requires Christians to only marry other Christians. We also believe in the sanctity and endurance of marriage as God's perfect will, intended to last between a man and a woman until separated by death. While divorced and remarried individuals may serve in various church capacities and be greatly used by God, they are not to be considered for the offices of pastor and deacon. (Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 2:24; Leviticus 18:22-24; Matthew 19:4-6; Romans 1:26-32; Corinthians 6:14; 1 Corinthians 7:39)

### *16. Family*

We believe in the spiritual equality of men and women before God yet recognize that God has ordained distinct and separate functions for each in the home and the church. Furthermore, we uphold the family as the foundational institution of human society, as ordained by God. The husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church, and the wife is to submit to her husband as the church submits to Christ. Children are considered a

heritage from the Lord, and parents bear the responsibility of teaching them spiritual and moral values, leading by example and appropriate discipline, including Scriptural corporal correction. (Genesis 1:26-28; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalms 127:3-5; Proverbs 19:18, 22:15, 23:13-14; Mark 10:6-12; I Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33, 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; Hebrews 13:4; I Peter 3:1-7; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:18; I Timothy 2:8-15, 3:2, 4-5, 12; Titus 1:6; Malachi 2:14-17; Matthew 19:3-12; Romans 7:1-3)

### *17. Sanctity of Human Life*

We believe that human life is sacred from conception, with the unborn child recognized as a living being created in the image of God. Abortion constitutes the unjustified and unexcused taking of this innocent life and is regarded as murder in any circumstance. Our stance is rooted in the belief that all human life, at every stage and condition from conception through natural death, is invaluable and worthy of protection and respect. This belief encompasses preborn babies, the aged, and the physically or mentally challenged, asserting a divine mandate to defend, protect, and value all human life as crafted by God (Job 3:16; Psalms 51:5, 139:14-16; Isaiah 44:24, 49:1, 5; Jeremiah 1:5, 20:15-18; Luke 1:44)

### *18. Racial Equality*

We believe that racial equality is fundamental. Every individual, regardless of race or ethnicity, is equal in the eyes of God and deserves equal respect and love. As such, any form of racial prejudice stands in direct opposition to the values taught in the Bible. We are committed to upholding these principles within our church and actively practicing them through our community outreach, demonstrating the unity and love of Christ towards all. (Galatians 3:28; Acts 10:34-35; Colossians 3:11)

## **Article 4- Membership**

### *1. Qualifications*

Any individual, irrespective of race and origin, who has embraced Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord, and demonstrates signs of a renewed life in Christ, is eligible for membership. This eligibility is contingent upon adherence to our Lord's command and example of baptism by immersion following a confession of faith in Jesus Christ, and agreement with the faith and practices outlined in this Constitution. The recommendation for membership shall be made by the pastor, subject to the following conditions:

1. Baptism- A candidate desiring membership through baptism must affirm their faith in Jesus Christ and partake in baptism, either at this church or a church of like faith and practice. The recognition of a candidate's baptism will be collectively decided by the pastor and deacons.
2. Letter of Recommendation- A candidate can be accepted joining from another church of the same faith and practice.
3. Restoration- If a candidate's membership has been dismissed by this church through discipline, after acknowledgements have been made by the candidate and repentance has been shown, this church may restore membership to that individual.

Members are required to fully agree with the church's doctrinal stance by signing the Statement of Faith without any reservations. This applies to the Pastor(s), deacons, all elected or appointed officers, Sunday School teachers, youth program leaders, and other organizational leaders within the church. Additionally, all these positions must be held by church members.

If any members diverge from the church's Statement of Faith in their doctrinal views, they are expected to voluntarily resign from their positions of responsibility and leadership. Should a change in doctrinal alignment be observed by the pastor and deacons, and the individual has not stepped down, it is incumbent upon the pastor, with the support of a majority of deacons, to recommend to the congregation the removal of the individual from their role. This ensures that leadership and responsibilities within the church remain aligned with its foundational beliefs.

Prospective members must meet with the pastor and deacons to share their testimony, confirm their agreeance to the Statement of Faith, and respond to any inquiries regarding their faith. Following approval by the pastor and deacons, candidates will be recommended to the congregation for acceptance.

During a regular church service, candidates must publicly share their salvation testimony prior to a membership vote. Admission to membership requires a majority voice vote. Any member who casts a dissenting vote must immediately privately explain their scriptural reasons to the pastor and deacons. The pastor and deacons will then determine the validity of the dissent. If deemed valid, the candidate's application will be temporarily paused for further investigation and resolution attempts by the pastor and deacons.

## *2. Duties of a Member*

Upon becoming a member, in concurrence with the church covenant, each individual commits to nurturing love and respect for fellow members, actively avoiding gossip and discord within the congregation. Members also pledge to support the church financially through tithes, offerings, and other contributions as led by the Lord. Furthermore, members are dedicated to conducting their lives in a way that upholds and reflects the church's beliefs and practices. Active membership is a prerequisite for service and ministry roles within Arlington Baptist Church. Exceptions for roles such as guest speakers or service contributions from like-minded family members or like-minded believers necessitate the pastor's explicit authorization. (Luke 6:38; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:7; Hebrews 10:22-25; 1 Peter 2)

## *3. Privileges of Membership*

1. Voting- Members that are eighteen years of age and above are entitled to vote on church matters. There shall be no absentee voting except under extreme circumstances. These extreme circumstances are limited to situations such as severe illness, military deployment, or other significant life events that physically prevent a member from being present, and such cases shall be determined at the discretion of the pastor.
2. Polity- Our church governance does not embody a pure democracy but functions as a theocracy, recognizing the Lord Jesus Christ as the Chief Shepherd, with the pastor serving as the under-shepherd. The pastor is entrusted with the primary leadership and guidance of the congregation, and members are called to submit to this leadership as detailed in Hebrews 13:17. Financial stewardship is structured to reflect responsibility and collective oversight: the pastor can independently authorize expenditures up to \$1,000; decisions involving up to \$3,000 require deacon consensus; and financial commitments exceeding \$3,000 mandate a majority congregational vote. In addition to financial matters, key issues such as church membership, missionary support, and significant church-wide initiatives are subject to a congregational model, ensuring member involvement and decision-making in substantial matters.
3. Finances- Members can request a financial report of the church's activities. They may not inspect or copy any individual's financial contributions, only the activities of the church itself. They may also request a written record of the minutes of any business meetings.

## *4. Dispute Resolution*

Following the Biblical directive in Matthew 18:15-17, our church employs a graduated approach for conflict resolution among members. Initially, individuals ought to pursue private reconciliation, reflecting on their own spiritual alignment and approaching one another with humility and a desire for peace. If personal efforts do not resolve the matter, involving one or two impartial witnesses is the next step, providing an opportunity for perspective and mediation.

Should these initial attempts fail to bring resolution, the issue is then escalated to the pastor and deacons for further guidance and intervention. This level of involvement ensures a comprehensive, prayerful, and scripturally grounded approach to addressing and resolving disputes within the church body.



Throughout all stages of conflict resolution, the overarching goals are to uphold the unity of the church, foster forgiveness, and healing, and restore broken relationships in a manner that honors God and reflects Christ's teachings on reconciliation. Members are encouraged to engage in this process with hearts and minds focused on love, truth, and the restoration of fellowship. This intentional, scripturally based approach to conflict resolution is essential to maintaining the health and spiritual integrity of the church community. This provision does not prohibit the involvement of lawful authorities regarding criminal activity or matters that jeopardize the safety of any persons.

### *5. Discipline of a Member*

This church maintains the authority to remove individuals from membership due to the endorsement of heretical doctrine or engagement in immoral behavior. Such disciplinary actions are undertaken with utmost care and are entrusted to the leadership of the pastor, who will approach the matter with prayer and patience.

1. **Pastoral Correction:** In instances where a pastor identifies a member participating in immoral behavior that contradicts scriptural teachings, the pastor will first undertake private counseling and correction efforts with the individual concerned. This initial step is guided by the principles of direct pastoral care. If the matter remains unresolved despite these efforts, it will be elevated to the deacons for a collective consideration and action. In cases where the issue continues without resolution and there is a consensus among the pastor and deacons, the matter will be brought before the church membership. At this stage, a formal decision will be made regarding the status of the individual's membership, ensuring that the church's values and scriptural standards are upheld.
2. **Handling Private Offenses:** In cases of private offenses between members, the church adheres to the above outlined "4. Dispute Resolution" guidelines, advocating for personal reconciliation as a first step. If the individuals involved cannot resolve the issue, the matter progresses to pastoral and deacon intervention. As a last resort, unresolved issues might be brought before the congregation. Throughout this process, the church emphasizes the importance of restoration, forgiveness, and maintaining a strong, united church. **Not all allegations warrant disciplinary action:** For charges to be considered, they must be clearly identifiable as violations of God's Word, the Statement of Faith, Church Covenant, or Constitution. This means the behavior in question should be both directly observed and explicitly contravene the established standards and teachings of the church, ensuring that disciplinary measures are reserved for clear, verifiable breaches of conduct.
3. **Dealing with Public Offenses:** For public offenses, particularly those that are scandalous or notably contrary to church teachings, the church responds swiftly as per the guidelines of 1 Corinthians 5. The goal is to address these matters promptly to maintain the church's integrity and witness. Actions may include a direct, more public approach to resolution and, if necessary, the consideration of immediate dismissal from membership to uphold the church's moral and spiritual standards. This ensures that the church remains a place of reverence, respect, and collective pursuit of holiness.

This church upholds the responsibility to maintain a committed membership and therefore, reserves the right to change the status of members based on attendance and adherence to church doctrine and moral conduct. Members who miss regular services for six consecutive weeks without providing a valid excuse will be classified as inactive. Inactive members lose their voting privileges and other active member rights. If the period of inactivity extends to six months with no reasonable justification for the absence, the member will be removed from the church membership rolls. These measures are taken to ensure active and engaged participation in the church, with all disciplinary actions carried out with pastoral care, prayer, and patience.

Restoration is the goal of any disciplinary process. Dismissed members who demonstrate genuine repentance, and a change of heart and behavior are eligible for restoration. This involves a review by the Pastor and the

deacons, sincere repentance of sin, and satisfactory evidence of change, culminating in a recommendation for restoration and a congregational vote.

An appeals process is available for any member who believes the disciplinary actions were misapplied or unjust. This may involve reviewing the application of Scripture, the facts of the case, adherence to constitutional procedures, or potential conflicts of interest.

#### *6. Dismissal of Members*

1. **Voluntary Withdrawal:** Members may request to voluntarily withdraw their membership at any time, and the church will honor and respectfully process such requests.
2. **Transfer to Another Church:** Members in good standing who wish to join another church of similar faith and practice may be granted a letter of transfer during a church meeting, facilitating a seamless transition. Conversely, if a member joins a church with significantly different beliefs and practices, their name will be removed from the membership roll following a formal church vote, reflecting the importance of doctrinal alignment.
3. **Disciplinary Removal:** Members may be removed from the church rolls because of disciplinary actions, adhering to the church's established procedures. This step is taken only after careful consideration and attempts at reconciliation, in line with Biblical principles of church discipline. Following the consensus from the deacons and pastor, the final decision for removal will be determined by a formal majority church vote.
4. **Upon Death:** Membership naturally concludes upon a member's death, at which point they are commemorated, and their name is respectfully removed from the active membership roll.

### **Article 5- Church Offices**

#### *1. Pastor*

**Qualifications and Role:** The qualifications for the pastor of Arlington Baptist Church align with the requirements detailed in 1 Timothy 3:1-6 and Titus 1:5-9 (additionally 1 Timothy 6:10-12; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Peter 5:1-3; and Acts 20:17-35). It is a firm policy that no individual who has been divorced or is married to a divorced person shall be considered as a candidate for the office of pastor.

The pastor shall be appointed by a minimum of a three-fourths majority vote of the church's voting members. The role of the pastor includes dedicating his time and efforts to the church's service. He is to be vigilant in his personal conduct and in caring for the congregation. While the pastor should try to personally visit members, especially the sick and homebound, he is primarily responsible for the oversight of all visitation activities (Acts 6:2). The pastor will lead the church in evangelistic efforts and be available for pastoral counseling as needed. The pastor is entrusted with the spiritual oversight of all church activities, preaching the Word of God (declaring the whole counsel of God), overseeing all ministries, administering ordinances, and moderating business meetings. He must consistently embody the Scriptural qualifications for pastoral leadership. Guided by 1 Peter 5:2-3, the pastor is expected to lead the church not for personal gain but with a sincere commitment to serving God's flock. Acknowledging human fallibility, the church emphasizes worship and loyalty solely to God (Matthew 4:10)

The pastor is granted the opportunity to serve in other pulpits for a maximum of two weeks (up to six services) each calendar year, maintaining full salary during this time. Additionally, the pastor is entitled to an annual vacation with full pay, the length of which is to be agreed upon mutually between the pastor and the deacons. To ensure continuous spiritual leadership and ministry during these absences, the pastor is responsible for arranging suitable alternate coverage for pulpit duties. This provision ensures that the pastor is supported in broadening ministry horizons and personal rejuvenation while maintaining the church's ongoing needs.

**The Pastor's Salary:** The salary initially established for the Pastor at the time of his calling will be subject to an

annual review conducted by the Deacons. They will make recommendations to the Church one month prior to the proposed annual budget process. This ensures that the Pastor's compensation remains fair and reflective of his continued service and dedication to the church.

**Removal and Resignation:** The pastoral position is considered permanent unless the pastor chooses to resign, providing at least thirty days' notice. A pastor who resigns in good standing and in alignment with the church's statement of faith may continue as a church member. However, if the pastor violates the statement of faith or becomes disqualified, a special meeting may be called for his termination, requiring a simple majority vote (over 50%) of the church's voting members.

Accusations against the pastor must be brought to the deacons' attention and will only be considered if they are substantiated by the testimony of two or more witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19). Should the pastor err in doctrine or conduct, the deacons are to attempt correction with a spirit of love, following the guidance of Galatians 6:1. If these attempts at correction are unsuccessful, the issue will then be escalated to the church membership, which holds the sole authority to act.

**Pulpit Committee:** In the event of a pastoral vacancy, the church will act promptly to ensure that pastoral duties continue to be fulfilled effectively. A pulpit committee, comprising the deacons and other selected active male members, will be established to undertake the search for a new pastor. This committee's responsibility is to seek out and vet candidates who embody the Scriptural qualifications for pastoral leadership. Each potential pastor will be carefully considered on an individual basis, ensuring that the church's spiritual and administrative needs are met by a suitable candidate.

Once a candidate is identified, they will be presented to the church for consideration. The congregation, particularly its active members, will have the opportunity to interact with, evaluate, and pray about the suitability of the candidate for the pastoral role. A vote will then be taken, requiring a three-fourths majority for the official appointment of the new pastor. This process is designed to be thorough and reflective, ensuring that the new pastor aligns with the church's doctrinal stance, spiritual health, and community needs. The deacons will continue to oversee and facilitate the pastoral duties and spiritual nourishment during the vacancy period.

## *2. Deacons*

**Qualifications and Role:** Deacons of Arlington Baptist Church are called to meet the character qualifications as detailed in Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. As a foundational policy, those who have been divorced or are married to a divorced person are not eligible to serve as deacons. Deacons are integral in meeting the needs of the congregation and in assisting with the administration of church ordinances. Their duties include supporting the pastor in fostering the spiritual welfare of the church, aiding in service conduct, and engaging in all aspects of church work. This involves assisting in visitations, evangelistic efforts, and forming the pulpit committee to present qualified candidates during pastoral vacancies. To ensure effective governance and coordination, the deacons and pastor are required to hold a dedicated meeting quarterly to review progress, set goals, and maintain alignment with the church's mission and values.

**Deacons Fund:** This provision authorizes the pastor and deacons to allocate resources from the General Fund to use as the Deacon's Fund. Dedicated to benevolent activities, the Deacon's Fund provides financial aid to church members and the broader community, embodying commitment to compassionate care.

Allocations from the Deacon's Fund must receive majority approval from both the deacons and the pastor. For benevolence gifts not exceeding one thousand dollars, the deacons are entrusted to distribute funds at their discretion. To maintain transparency and uphold accountability, regular financial reports detailing the usage of

the Deacon's Fund will be provided.

**Term and Re-election:** A deacon's term is set for three years. Subsequent re-elections are at the discretion of the church, based on the deacon's ongoing suitability and commitment to the role. A deacon may have their term terminated earlier if they express a desire to step down or if the pastor deems it necessary.

**Removal of a Deacon:** Should a deacon become disqualified from their office, either through a breach of qualifications or failure to uphold their duties, they will be removed from their position by the pastor and other deacons, as guided by the principles in Proverbs 15:22. However, unless further disciplinary action is warranted, they may continue as active members of the church.

### *3. Church Treasurer*

The Church Treasurer, an active member of the congregation, is entrusted with the comprehensive management of the church's finances. Responsibilities include maintaining accurate financial records, handling deposits, and distributing funds as directed by the church, the pastor, or the deacons. The treasurer is accountable for safeguarding all church funds, ensuring they are deposited in approved banks or financial institutions. Regular duties also involve issuing receipts for contributions, disbursements of funds in line with the church's budget or as directed, and ensuring all expenditures are made via check or electronic payment, except for minor petty cash transactions.

The treasurer is obligated to present written, itemized reports of disbursements at semi-annual church administration meetings and provide an annual summary at the year's end for the entire congregation, including individual statements for contributors' tax purposes. Maintaining transparent, correct, and up-to-date accounts of all assets, liabilities, receipts, and capital is imperative.

To uphold financial integrity and avoid potential conflicts of interest, it is mandated that if the Church Treasurer is related to the pastor or is the pastor themselves, an independent auditor will be appointed to conduct an annual review of the church's financial records.

The office of the treasurer is a three-year term, subject to continuation unless resignation or removal due to failure in performing duties is necessary. Upon leaving office, the treasurer is responsible for transferring all records to their successor, ensuring a seamless transition, and continued fiscal responsibility for the church.

### *4. Church Clerk*

The Church Clerk, an active member, is entrusted with the vital task of maintaining accurate and comprehensive records for the church. This includes recording minutes of all business and special meetings, keeping an updated membership roll of active and inactive members, and noting significant historical events. The clerk is responsible for certifying, maintaining, and exhibiting the original bylaws and their amendments, along with documenting the proceedings and attendance of deacon meetings. As the custodian of church records, the clerk ensures that all significant certificates are appropriately filed and accessible.

Additionally, the clerk is tasked with ensuring that all legal notices and documents are duly given and filed in accordance with bylaws and legal requirements. In their role, they must sign, certify, or attest documents as needed and are responsible for presenting a comprehensive report of the church's status and membership changes at the annual administration meeting. The office of the church clerk is held for three years, subject to termination or extension based on performance. Upon departure, the clerk is expected to deliver all records to their successor, ensuring a seamless transition and ongoing integrity in church documentation. Serving as the secretary of the corporation, the clerk upholds the church's administrative and legal standings, reflecting the commitment to stewardship and orderliness within the church.

## 5. Committees

The pastor shall appoint committees as needed for certain periods of time. Examples: Committees for music, missions, VBS, audit, etc.

## 6. Eligibility for Office

1. The church shall not install or retain an officer who fails to adhere to or expresses disagreement with the Statement of Faith. All church officers, upon request of the pastor, shall affirm their agreement with the Statement of Faith.
2. All church officers must be approved by the pastor for them to commence in their offices.
3. Only church members are eligible for election or appointment to any church office or position.
4. Two elected offices are the maximum that any one family can hold at any given time. A family is defined as close blood relatives or family members of the same household or marriage related.

## 7. Transparency and Accountability

In all aspects of our operations, both administrative and financial, Arlington Baptist Church is committed to upholding the highest standards of transparency and accountability. Our approach includes:

1. **Open Communication:** We will maintain open and clear communication regarding the use and management of church resources.
2. **Integrity in Leadership:** The integrity of our leadership is paramount. We are committed to addressing any instances of misconduct or ethical lapses among church leaders in an appropriate and Biblical manner. Instances of sin will not be covered up and will be handled publicly within our church and in our broader interactions with our community.
3. **Community Trust:** By upholding these standards, we aim to build and maintain trust within our congregation and the wider community, demonstrating our commitment to Godly stewardship and ethical conduct (2 Corinthians 8:20-21).

Transparency and accountability are fundamental to our mission, guiding us in our endeavor to serve as a beacon of Christ's teachings in all our actions and decisions.

## Article 6- Missionary Support

The church earnestly commits to supporting missionaries aligned with our statement of faith and practice, both through prayer and financial aid. To foster this commitment:

1. **Monthly Contributions:** On the first Sunday of each month, all offerings will be specifically directed to the missions account (unless specified otherwise), supplemented by designated giving throughout the month. This ensures a steady and purposeful stream of support for our missionary endeavors.
2. **Missionary Consideration and Agreement:** Missionaries considered for support will be presented to the congregation, allowing members to understand their ministry and doctrinally align with our church. Each missionary or mission agency is required to sign an agreement aligning with our statement of faith to maintain doctrinal consistency and shared vision.
3. **Decision-Making and Support:** The congregation will vote to decide on supporting a missionary, requiring a majority for approval. Financial support for approved missionaries will then be allocated from the designated missions account, ensuring our commitment to global evangelism is actively practiced.
4. **Ongoing Evaluation and Adjustment:** The church remains committed to regular evaluation of missionary support, ensuring continued alignment with our mission and values. This may involve adjusting support levels, reaffirming commitments, or making necessary changes based on the effectiveness and alignment of the missionaries' work with our doctrinal stance.
5. **Determination of Support:** The church will vote on the amount of support to provide to missionaries, based on recommendations from the pastor and deacons or a missionary committee, if established. A missionary committee, once formed, will propose potential missionaries, the amount of support, and the duration of support for consideration. This committee will serve to carefully assess the needs and effectiveness of

missionary work, ensuring our resources are used wisely and in a manner that most effectively furthers the Gospel.

### **Article 7- Meetings**

The church operates on a fiscal year from January 1 to December 31:

1. **Worship Meetings:** Regular worship services are held every Sunday, with weekly Bible study and prayer meetings. Services are open to the public.
2. **Semi-Annual Business Meetings:** Semi-annual business meetings are scheduled for late January or early February and a mid-year meeting in late June or early July. These meetings, set by the pastor, will be announced two weeks prior, while any cancellation or rescheduling of meetings will be decided by the Pastor and Deacons. For valid proceedings, two-thirds of active members and the presence of the pastor and at least one deacon are required. Only members are permitted in these meetings unless granted approval by the pastor. The agenda includes an opening prayer, reading of the previous minutes, treasurer's report, nominations, old and new business discussions, and a closing prayer. Semiannual business meetings will address regular church matters and are guided by, but not strictly bound to, Robert's Rules of Order.
3. **Special Business Meetings:** Special business meetings can be convened by the Pastor or Deacons, with prior Sunday service announcements, while any cancellation or rescheduling of meetings will be decided by the Pastor and Deacons. For valid proceedings, two-thirds of active members and the presence of the pastor and at least one deacon are required. Only members are permitted in these meetings unless granted approval by the pastor. The agenda includes an opening prayer, the specific special business discussions, and a closing prayer. Special business meetings will address unique church matters and are guided by, but not strictly bound to, Robert's Rules of Order.
4. **Robert's Rules of Order (Briefly Defined):**
  - a. Quorum: A two-thirds minimum number of members must be present to conduct official business.
  - b. Motion: A formal proposal by a member, on which the group will act.
  - c. Debate: Members discuss the motion.
  - d. Amendments: Changes or additions to a motion that are debated and voted upon before the main motion.
  - e. Voting: Decisions are typically made by a majority vote. Methods include voice, roll call, or ballot.
  - f. Order of Business: Meetings follow a standard order, such as calling to order, reading minutes, reports, old and new business.
  - g. Point of Order: A member can challenge a procedure if they believe it violates the rules.
  - h. Adjournment: The meeting ends formally through a motion or by following the agenda.

### **Article 8- Technology and Communication**

Recognizing the importance of spreading God's word in our modern world, this church commits to utilizing contemporary communication technologies for evangelism and outreach. Our approach is inspired by the Biblical call to 'Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvellous works among all nations,' (1 Chronicles 16:23-24).

1. **Digital Evangelism:** We will engage in digital evangelism, spreading the Gospel through various online platforms.
2. **Outreach Expansion:** Through these technologies, we aim to expand our outreach efforts, reaching beyond traditional boundaries to share God's message globally.

This commitment to communication as tools for evangelism and outreach reflects our desire to adapt to the changing landscape of communication, ensuring that the timeless message of the Gospel reaches all corners of the earth.

## **Article 9- Use of Church Property**

1. **Purpose and Use:** The church's buildings and facilities are dedicated spaces for activities and meetings that align with promoting the gospel and honoring our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Their use is exclusively reserved for purposes that reflect and uphold the church's mission and values.
2. **Authority and Oversight:** The pastor and deacons hold the authority to approve the use of church property. They reserve the right to deny requests for activities or meetings that do not align with the church's policies and beliefs.
3. **Member Privileges:** Church members may use the church building for personal events such as weddings and funerals. These occasions, while personal, must still reflect the values and beliefs of the church.
4. **Prohibition of Commercial Use:** The church's buildings and facilities are not to be used for commercial or profit-making purposes. This policy ensures that our focus remains on spiritual and community activities.
5. **Property Rights:** Individuals who have been dismissed from membership or who have voluntarily withdrawn their membership forfeit any claims to church property. Any church property in their possession must be promptly returned to the church.

## **Article 10- Leadership Standards**

Leaders within the Arlington Baptist Church are those who occupy pivotal roles in guiding the church. This includes, but is not limited to, the pastor, deacons, Sunday School Superintendent, youth director, Sunday School teachers, and other organizational leaders within the church. To maintain the integrity and effectiveness of our leadership, the following standards are set:

1. **Church Membership:** Leaders must be members in good standing of Arlington Baptist Church.
2. **Constitutional Alignment:** Leaders should be in fundamental agreement with, and personally adhere to, the church's Constitution and doctrinal position.
3. **Moral Conduct:** Leaders are expected to abstain from practices that could negatively influence weaker believers or tarnish the reputation of Christ. This includes avoiding the use of tobacco, alcoholic beverages, engaging in undisciplined speech, and refraining from all immoral and dishonest behavior.
4. **Service Attendance:** Regular attendance at scheduled church services is essential, barring exceptional circumstances. This commitment reflects a dedication to spiritual growth.
5. **Excellence in Service:** Leaders are expected to perform their roles with excellence, aiming to glorify the Lord and edify others through their service.
6. **Age and Maturity:** Leaders should possess the maturity and experience necessary to fulfill their responsibilities with wisdom and grace. Generally, leaders should be post-high school age, apart from high school students approved to assist in nurseries or children's churches on a rotational basis. Youth participating in ministry should prioritize their age-appropriate church activities designed for their own spiritual development.
7. **Financial Support:** Leaders are encouraged to contribute regularly and systematically to the church's financial needs, supporting the church's work and mission.

These standards are established to ensure that those in leadership positions at Arlington Baptist Church exemplify the values of our faith, serving as role models for the congregation and the wider community.

## **Article 11- Arbitration**

1. **Submission to Arbitration:** In adherence to the scriptural guidance that discourages lawsuits among believers, all members of this church agree to engage in binding arbitration for any disputes that cannot be resolved internally. This includes a waiver of the right to bring any such disagreements to a civil court, except to enforce an arbitration award.

2. **Initiation of Arbitration Process:** Should any disputes, claims, questions, or disagreements arise related to the bylaws or other church matters, all parties are expected to earnestly seek a resolution in a manner that honors Christian principles. This involves good faith negotiations and consultations, aimed at reaching a just and equitable solution, upholding the dignity of Christ's name. If a resolution is not reached within sixty days, either party may initiate arbitration.
3. **Scope of Arbitration in Church Matters:**
  1. In disputes involving church discipline, arbitrators will focus solely on determining if the church's disciplinary procedures were properly followed.
  2. In cases concerning the removal of the pastor or any church officer, the arbitration will be limited to assessing the adherence to prescribed procedures.
4. **Arbitration Procedures:** The specific procedures for conducting arbitration will be as established by the pastor and the deacons, ensuring fairness and adherence to the church's values and governance structure.
5. **Arbitration of Civil Disputes Between Members:** For matters of disagreement and disputes involving civil issues an arbitration by the pastor or an appointed proxy can be appealed for by church members. The proceeding will involve a hearing of the matter with each side presenting their position and dispute decently and in order. If the arbiter cannot facilitate an agreed-upon resolution, he will render a just verdict through thoughtful, spirit-led judgment and prayer.

This article ensures that all conflicts within the church are handled in a way that is consistent with Christian values and church governance, emphasizing internal resolution and arbitration over civil litigation.

### **Article 12- Dissolution**

In the event of dissolution of this church, all property and assets shall go to a church or mission board of like faith and practice. The votes required to dissolve the church shall be at least 90% of the current voting members.

### **Article 13- Amendments**

This constitution may be revised and/or amended by a three-fourths majority vote of voting members of this church. This must be done in a special meeting that has been announced at least two weeks in advance. The proposed amendments shall be written and given to the membership prior to the special meeting being held.



Arlington Baptist Church Covenant

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, on the profession of our faith, and having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant of promise with one another, as one body in Christ for membership at Arlington Baptist Church.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit to walk together in Christian love, to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully in the financial needs of the church for the support of the ministries of this church, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the support of missionaries of like faith as they preach and teach the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and personal devotion; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of the lost; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements and exemplary in our behavior; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We also engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in Christ's love and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, to not sow discord in the members of the body of this church and to be always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the words of our Savior and to secure it without delay.

We further engage that we will be faithful in our attendance to this church, and we will make every possible attempt to be present in all its regularly scheduled services, all special scheduled services and all its functions of fellowship and ministry as long as we are physically able.

Therefore, with this covenant, may the very God of peace be with us wholly and we ask His blessing on this union of membership between you and this body as we are preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

By signing below, I hereby affirm my commitment to the Statement of Faith, Church Covenant, and the Constitution of Arlington Baptist Church as revised on February 18, 2024. I pledge to uphold its doctrines, abide by its covenants, and adhere to its governing principles as a member of this church. I understand that my signature represents a solemn vow before God and the church body to live and conduct myself in a manner consistent with the teachings of Scripture and the collective mission and vision of Arlington Baptist Church.

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_