

TWO RIVERS BAPTIST CHURCH

[Referred to in this document as “The Fellowship” or “the church”]

The Fellowship exists to do whatever it takes to develop disciples of Jesus Christ.

Under the sovereign Lordship of Jesus Christ, the membership of The Fellowship retains unto itself the exclusive right of self-government under His leadership in all phases of the life of the church.

BYLAWS

Article I. Church Membership

Section 1 – The Purpose of Membership (i.e., Ministry Partnership)

The New Testament presents a picture of individuals who, once committed to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, identified themselves with and committed themselves to a particular local body. While we recognize that the body of Christ includes every born-again believer, whether a member of this church or not, in order to implement the principles of accountability and commitment to the local body of Christ, as defined in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 12:12-27) and practiced in the early churches, this church recognizes the need for formal membership.

The terms “ministry partner” and “member” or “ministry partnership” and “membership” are interchangeable in these Bylaws.

The membership of this church, acting through the elders, reserves the right to determine who shall be members of this church, and the conditions of such membership.

Section 2 – Candidacy for Church Membership (i.e., Ministry Partnership)

Any person may offer himself/herself as a candidate for membership in this church. All candidates shall request membership in the church by one of the following ways:

- by profession of faith, followed by baptism by immersion; or,
- by statement of both prior conversion and believer’s baptism by immersion.

Any person desiring to unite with this church will be expected to:

- be willing to be discipled, be disciple makers, and seek to live a godly life; ▪ be willing to support this church with prayers, faithful attendance, and systematic giving as taught in the Word of God;
- express a willingness to submit to, and minister within, the framework of the Statement of Faith and Constitution of this church; and
- not be under discipline by any other Christ-honoring, Bible-believing church.

Section 3 – Acceptance of New Church Members (i.e., Ministry Partners)

1. Following counseling to confirm that the candidate is qualified for membership according to Article I, Section 2, the candidate shall be affirmed by the Elders.
2. Any questions about a candidate's qualifications for membership in this church shall be referred to the Elders.
3. All potential members of this church will participate in a membership class that teaches the church's purpose, its beliefs, its covenant, and its relationships as stated in the church's Constitution.

Section 4 – Rights and Responsibilities of Members (i.e., Ministry Partners)

1. All members are expected to be faithful and obedient in all areas of Christian life, to exercise their spiritual gifts, to follow the leadership of this church, to give regularly for its support, and to participate actively in the pursuits and ministries of this church unless prevented from doing so by health, ministry need, or military service.
2. Active Membership will be recognized by regular participation in corporate worship or a defined ministry role of the following:
 - a. Bible study/discipleship class attendance;
 - b. recorded financial giving; and/or
 - c. service in the ministries of the church.

Failure to regularly participate for six (6) months will result in a member being contacted by the church to inquire about the member's status. If the member does not resume regular participation, they will be designated as Inactive. Inactive members forfeit all rights of active membership by their inactivity and lack of support of the church. After being placed on Inactive status, a member who desires to return to Active status may do so after three (3) months of regular participation. If a member remains inactive for an additional three (3) months, and another inquiry by the church does not result in regular participation, they will be removed from membership. Exceptions to this policy may be requested in writing to the Elders, whose decision will be final. Should any dispute arise regarding a member's activity, it is the duty of the member to provide evidence of such activity. It will be the responsibility of the Elders or those designated by them, to implement and carry out this process in a manner that holds members accountable while exhibiting Christ-like love and compassion.

3. Every member of the church, after thorough self-examination (as described in 1 Corinthians 11:27-32), is encouraged to participate in the Lord's Supper when it is administered by the church.
4. Any Active Member of the church in good standing may be considered by the membership as a candidate for positions of ministry service in the church, according to the eligibility identified in these Bylaws and/or policies of this church.
5. Active Members who are in good standing, and who have passed their twelfth birthday, shall be entitled to vote at all elections and on all questions submitted to the church.
6. A majority vote of the Active Members will be required for approval of:
 - a. items brought to the Annual Meeting for church consideration;
 - b. new Elders; and/or
 - c. any purchase or sale valued over \$3,000,000.
7. Membership shall not be assignable by any member, nor shall membership vest to any personal representative or heir. Voting privileges are not transferable in any way.

Section 5 – Termination of Membership (i.e., Ministry Partnership)

Membership shall be terminated in one of the following ways:

1. death of the member;
2. joining another church;
3. removal upon personal request;
4. exclusion by action of this church according to Article 1, Section 6; or
5. inactivity as described in Article 1, Section 4, Subsection 1.

Section 6 – Discipline of Members (i.e., Ministry Partners) The purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church (1 Corinthians 5:6), to edify believers by deterring sin (1 Timothy 5:20), and to promote the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling them to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (Galatians 6:1). The attitude of members toward one another shall be guided by a concern for redemption rather than punishment. It shall be the practice of this church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure will be taken to assist any troubled member.

1. Members of this church and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with this church who err in doctrine, or who engage in conduct that violates Scripture, shall be subject to church discipline, including dismissal. Interpretation of Scriptural standards will be the responsibility of the Elders.
 - a. For the protection of the testimony of the gospel, members of The Fellowship who have knowledge of another member who is behaving in a manner not consistent with the teachings of Christ and the beliefs of this church will be expected to follow the pattern set in Matthew 18:15-18.
 - b. In accordance with New Testament teaching, the Elders, in the exercise of their discretion, may proceed to remove an individual from membership when one or more of the following have occurred:
 - i. where the transgression and the refusal to repent have been public and to the offense of the whole Church (1 Cor. 5:1-5);
 - ii. where the disciplined party has taught or otherwise disseminated doctrine deemed false or erroneous by the Elders, then the disciplined party has chosen to disregard the direction and reproof of the Elders (Romans 16:17); or
 - iii. where the disciplined party has been warned twice to cease from divisive conduct and has chosen to disregard those warnings (Titus 3:10-11).

All such proceedings shall be pervaded by a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance.

2. If a member desires to join another church and is not in good standing at The Fellowship, that status will be communicated to the potential new church.
3. In keeping with 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, the members of this church, and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with this church, agree not to pursue legal action against, or sue, the church, Elders, church staff, or other church leadership in connection with the performance of their official duties—including, but not limited to, public statements to the congregation regarding church discipline.

4. Separate and apart from the process of church discipline, but subject to the discretion and approval of the Elders, a member, non-member regular attender, or other individual may be notified that he or she is not to be present upon church premises for such a period of time as is deemed necessary for the safety and well-being of others on church premises. Such required absence may, but need not, be concurrent with church discipline of that person. Upon said notification, said person shall refrain from entering upon any premises owned by The Fellowship until such time as they are notified in writing by the elders that such prohibition is no longer in effect.

Article II. Church Leadership

In keeping with the teaching of the New Testament and the early Christian church's practice, The Fellowship recognizes leadership through a body of Elders, which provides a consistent practice of mutual dependence on God for leading the church. Elders are to be "servants of the Word" in the sense that they are to seek after the spiritual nourishment and development of the congregation.

The church further recognizes the modern distinction in pastoral leadership between vocational pastors and laymen, both of which are gifted and called to teach and serve His body. We also recognize the gifting of various teams to serve specialized needs within our congregation.

Section 1 – Elders

In New Testament teaching, the leadership of the church is referred to in the plural. Although no specific number is stated, the principle of plurality of leadership was practiced. In light of the biblical evidence, The Fellowship is guided, led, and taught by a group of men who are called and equipped to serve our congregation through the ministry of the Word. This body shall be composed of both vocational ministers and laymen.

1. Role – In accordance with the meaning of the work and practice in the New Testament, Elders are to be the spiritual leaders and overseers of the ministry of the church. The Elders will teach sound doctrine and admonish and correct error (Titus 1:9); oversee the process of church discipline; devote themselves to prayer (Acts 6:4); pray over and anoint the sick (James 5:14); equip the membership for the ministry of the gospel (Ephesians 4:11-12); assist the work of ministry teams; evaluate the effectiveness of the ministries of the church; seek God's will for His church; and communicate that vision and direction to the congregation.
 - a. In keeping with their position as overseers of the ministries of the church, Elders may serve as ex-officio members of all teams and committees, and may establish ministry teams as the needs of the church dictate.
 - b. In order to protect the reputation of the gospel, the church, and the integrity of leadership, the Elders will be mutually accountable to each other and to the church, will encourage each other, and will build each other up in the faith. They are to work together under the Lordship of Christ for the benefit and protection of the Body.

2. Qualifications – The qualifications for the position of Elder, while including those characteristics which should be common to all Christians, are also specifically restrictive. Elders are to be men whose lives are typified by the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:2- 7 and Titus 1:6-9, with an emphasis on the gifting to teach and uphold sound doctrine.
3. Procedure – The Elders shall be comprised of no less than three (3) laymen (the “Lay Elders”) and two (2) members of the ministerial staff. As the needs of the congregation warrant, and as God provides qualified and willing men to serve, the team may be expanded as the Elders see fit, not to exceed twelve (12) members.
 - a. A majority of the Elders shall be composed of church members who are not regularly employed by the church.
 - b. Any member of the church may nominate a man whom they feel meets the qualifications of an Elder. The qualifications of all nominees will be reviewed by the Elders. Upon successful determination of the qualifications of the nominees and their willingness to serve, a list of suitable candidates will be presented to the church and new Elders shall be elected and appointed per Article I, Section 4, Subsection 6.
 - c. All men not previously ordained will be ordained by the church to serve as an Elder. If a man is chosen who has been ordained by another church of like faith and order, such ordination shall suffice for the purpose of serving The Fellowship.
 - d. An Elder who has previously served as Elder at The Fellowship may be affirmed by the church to serve again.
4. Term – Lay Elders are selected to serve a term of three (3) years. Upon completion of a three (3) year term, Lay Elder may serve an additional three (3) year term, but may not serve a third consecutive term. If a Lay Elder serves two (2) consecutive terms, one (1) year must pass after the completion of his second term before he is eligible to serve in the role again. To properly fulfill the duties of this office, it would be best if an Elder served in this position exclusively for his entire term. A Lay Elder may serve in an additional elected position in the church for one (1) year of his term, however, if there is need for him to do so. Each year, the assigned term of office of approximately one-third (1/3) of the number of Elders shall expire, and elections will be held to fill the vacancies created by this rotation and the growth of the church family. When an Elder is no longer able to serve due to death, incapacitation, removal, or is no longer a member of The Fellowship, the church may elect a man to fill the unexpired term. When an Elder’s behavior is in direct contradiction or violation of the Elder qualifications, the Elders shall be authorized to declare the position vacant immediately by unanimous vote (exclusive of the Elder in question).
5. Vacancies – The Elders may fill a position with an inactive Elder (an Elder not currently serving on the active body) or ask the church to enter into the nominating and voting process.
6. Final say in all matters of dispute within the church body rests with the Elders.

Section 2 Ministerial Staff

We recognize the benefit of employing vocational ministerial staff to assist and coordinate the numerous areas of ministry of The Fellowship. Therefore, Ministerial and other professional staff shall be called and employed as the church determines the need for such positions. The staff includes those holding the title of "Pastor" for the purpose of distinguishing those who have been called by God and ordained by the church to the work of equipping believers for ministry.

1. **Qualifications** – A person serving as part of the Ministerial Staff should be consistently and clearly growing in his/her faith and have an active devotional life. He/she should be above reproach in his/her reputation, mature in his/her relationships, hospitable, and generous. His/her theology should be compatible with the doctrinal statement of the church. He/she should have a burden for evangelizing the lost, discipling believers, and equipping the body of Christ in ministry.
2. **Procedure** – A job description shall be written by the Human Resources Team, as described in Article II, Section 4, when the need for a staff member is determined. Any member of the Ministerial Staff may relinquish their position by giving notice of resignation to the church at least two (2) weeks in advance of the effective date of resignation. If a minister's behavior is found to be in direct contradiction of scripture, or in violation of ministerial qualifications, the Elders, in work with the Human Resources Ministry Team, shall be authorized to declare the position vacant immediately. The terms of compensation of Ministerial Staff will be determined by the Human Resources Ministry Team in consultation with the Elders and the Budget and Finance Ministry Team.

Section 3 – Church Officers

The officers of this church shall be a Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer(s), and Trustees.

1. **Moderator** – One of the Elders will act as the presiding officer in all business meetings according to the rules of order authorized in Article V, Section 4 of these Bylaws. The moderator will be designated by the body of Elders.
2. **Clerk** – The church shall elect annually a Clerk as its clerical officer. The Clerk shall be responsible for keeping a suitable record of all official actions of the church, except as otherwise herein provided. The Clerk shall be responsible for keeping a register of names of members, with dates of admission, dismissal, death, or erasure, together with a record of baptisms. The Clerk shall issue letters of dismissal voted by the church, preserve on file all communications and written official reports, and give required notice of all meetings where notice is necessary, as indicated in the Bylaws. The Clerk shall be responsible for preparing the Annual Church Profile. The Clerk may delegate some of the clerical responsibilities. All church records are church property and shall be kept in the church office.
3. **Treasurer** – The church shall elect annually a church Treasurer(s) as its financial officer(s). The Treasurer(s) shall be responsible to oversee the safeguarding of assets. The Treasurer(s) and financial administrator shall prepare a report of receipts and disbursements for presentation to the church at each regular business meeting. Upon approval by the church, the report and records shall become a part of the permanent records of the church. The Treasurer shall be bonded, the church paying for the bond. All financial records are church property and shall be kept in the church office.
4. **Trustees** – The Elders shall serve as the Trustees of the church. They shall hold in trust the church property. The Trustees shall have the power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any church property per the guidelines set forth under Article I, Section 4, Subsection 6. When the signatures of Trustees are required, they shall sign legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or rental of property, or other legal documents related to church-approved matters. Each legal contract involving the church must be signed by two or more Trustees.

Section 4 – Church Ministry Teams

The standing committees of this church shall be a Human Resource Ministry Team and a Budget and Finance Ministry Team. Other ministry teams may be formed and disbanded by the recommendation of the Elders. All church ministry team members shall be recommended by the church. Ministry Team members shall serve on a three (3) year rotation basis with one-third (1/3) to be elected each year unless otherwise specified. Members of the standing committees who rotate off are not eligible for re-election to the same committee for one year.

1. Human Resource Ministry Team – This team, composed of not less than six (6) members, serves the church in matters related to those employed by the church. The Human Resource Ministry Team, working with the Elders and appropriate staff members, shall be responsible for determining staff needs and recommending persons for employment as stated in the Bylaws. The Human Resource Ministry Team is also responsible for recommending or approving salaries, benefits, and other compensation, and developing personnel policies, job descriptions, and other personnel services.
2. Budget and Finance Ministry Team – This team, composed of not less than six (6) members, shall work with the Elders, appropriate staff members, and the church Treasurer(s) to prepare an annual budget to be recommended for adoption by the church. They shall monitor monthly the financial affairs of the church. Their responsibilities include recommending appropriate action on financial matters and keeping the members informed and aware of the financial needs of the church. The Budget and Finance Ministry Team may require a review or an audit of the financial matters of the church and recommend appropriate action.

Section 5 – Deacons

The New Testament describes the inception of the office and the qualifications of Deacons. While both Elders and Deacons are described as servants, the critical distinction between them is the scope of their service. Deacons are charged with caring for the physical needs of the Body and, in part, by doing so, preserving the unity of the Body.

1. Role – In accordance with the meaning of the work and practice in the New Testament, Deacons are to be servants of the church and under the leadership of the Elders. The Elders and the Deacons shall approve the manner in which this will be accomplished.
2. Qualifications – According to 1 Timothy 3:8-13, “Deacons, likewise, should be worthy of respect, not hypocritical, not drinking a lot of wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And they must also be tested first; if they prove blameless, then they can serve as deacons. Wives, too, must be worthy of respect, not slanderers, self-controlled, faithful in everything. Deacons must be husbands of one wife, managing their children and their own households competently. For those who have served well as deacons acquire a good standing for themselves, and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus” (HCSB).
3. Procedure – Any active member of the church may recommend any man whom they believe meets the qualifications of a Deacon. The qualifications of each eligible nominee will be reviewed by the Elders and the Lead Deacon(s) (designated chairman of the Deacons). Upon successful confirmation of the qualifications of a nominee and his willingness to serve, he will be appointed to assume a particular Deacon role. Any candidate appointed who has not been previously ordained will be ordained by the church to serve as Deacon. If a Deacon is chosen who has been ordained by another church of like faith and order, such ordination shall suffice for the purpose of serving The Fellowship. New Deacons will be presented to the church at appropriate times.

4. Term – Deacons are selected to serve a term of two (2) years. If a Deacon’s behavior is found to be in direct contradiction of scripture, or in violation of Deacon qualifications, the Elders and Lead Deacon(s) shall be authorized to declare the position vacant immediately.

Article III. Church Organizations

The church shall have such ministries, organizations, and services as are determined necessary to accomplish the purpose of the church stated in Article II of the Constitution. All church organizations shall be under church control; all leaders shall be selected by the Elders, Ministerial Staff, or other elected leaders; and all activities shall be subject to church coordination and supervision.

Article IV. Church Ordinances

Section 1 – Baptism

The church shall receive for baptism any person who has received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior by personal faith, who professes Him publicly, and who by counseling confirms a commitment to follow Christ as Lord (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:41).

Baptism

1. shall be by immersion in water;
2. shall be administered by whomever the Elders authorize; and
3. shall be administered as an act of worship.

Section 2 – The Lord’s Supper

The church shall observe The Lord’s Supper for born again believers in remembrance of Jesus and to proclaim His death until He returns (1 Corinthians 11:24-26). Whomever the Elders authorize shall lead in observing The Lord’s Supper.

Article V. Church Meetings

Section 1 – Worship Services

The church shall meet together regularly for the worship of Almighty God. These worship services may have the following elements: prayer, praise, preaching, instruction, and evangelism. All of these will be offered in a manner consistent with the purpose of the church.

Section 2 – Annual Meeting

1. The church shall hold its annual meeting to affirm the church officers and standing committees. The schedule will be communicated through church digital or print media.
2. The church may call special meetings to consider matters that are of a special nature and beyond the normal scope of a regular annual meeting. Ten (10) days’ notice must be given for such specially called business meetings, unless, due to extreme urgency, the rendering of

such notice is deemed by the Elders or officers of the church to be impractical or counterproductive to the general welfare of the church. When notice is given, it shall contain the subject matter, date, time, and place of the called meeting. Notice shall be given in such a manner that active members have knowledge of the meeting.

3. Unless specifically announced, all meetings held during Sunday morning services for the stated purpose of voting on a measure shall be held without discussion. Opportunity for discussion will be provided prior to any votes.
4. The Elders will conduct informal meetings at least quarterly for the purpose of communicating vision, direction, and new ministries as well as answering questions. The schedule will be communicated through church publications.
5. The method of voting on any question put before the membership will be determined by the Elders.

Section 3 – Quorum

The active members present shall constitute a quorum for any meeting of the church that is called within the provisions of this article.

Section 4 – Parliamentary Rules

The authority for the spirit of all meetings shall be The Bible. Unless otherwise stated in the Bylaws, the authority for parliamentary rules of procedure for all business meetings of the church shall be Robert’s Rules of Order (latest edition). In the event of a dispute regarding interpretation of the rules of order, or when they will be set aside in favor of scriptural precedent, the decision of the Elders will be final.

Article VI. Church Finances

Section 1 – Budget

The Budget and Finance Ministry Team, in consultation with the Elders, appropriate staff members, and the church Treasurer(s), shall prepare and submit a comprehensive budget to the church. The new budget will be made available to the church in December of each year. Elders and Budget and Finance Team members will be available to any member for discussion of the new budget. Amendments to the budget must be approved by the Elders and Budget and Finance Team.

It is understood that membership in this church involves financial obligation to support the church and its causes with tithes and offerings.

Section 2 – Accounting Procedures

All funds shall be received by the church and be properly recorded on the financial books of the church. The Budget and Finance Ministry Team will oversee a system of accounting that will adequately provide for the handling of all funds.

Section 3 – Records Management

The Elders will maintain a written policy regarding access, storage, and destruction of all records of the church. At no time will records pertaining to, or revealing any detail of, confidential counseling by members of the Ministerial Staff be made available for public inspection.

Section 4 – Fiscal Year

The Budget and Finance Ministry Team, in cooperation with the Elders, appropriate staff members, and the church Treasurer(s) shall recommend the church fiscal year.

Article VII. Church Policies and Procedures

The church will maintain a copy of all written policies and procedures in the church office. All activities of the church body or conducted on church property will be governed by these written policies and procedures. Additions, revisions, or deletions of any written policies and procedures will be made under the leadership of the Elders and other responsible parties. Additions, revisions, or deletions of financial or personnel policies or procedures will be made in conjunction with the Budget and Finance Ministry Team or Human Resource Ministry Team, respectively.

Article VIII. Amendments

Changes in the Bylaws may be made at regular or called business meeting of the church as defined by Article IV, Section 2, provided each amendment shall have been presented in writing to those present at a previous business meeting. Amendments to the Bylaws shall be by a majority of the church members voting.

Furthermore, these Bylaws must be reviewed by a committee selected by the Elders and reviewed no less frequently than every three (3) years. This committee shall present to the congregation a report recommending any appropriate addition, deletion, or modification of these Bylaws. Adoption of these recommendations shall be subject to the terms of this Article.