

## **1.01 Constitution**

### **Article I—Name and History**

#### **Section 1—Name**

The name of this church is Northwest Bible Church and it is located in Dallas, Texas.

#### **Section 2—History**

The major events in the history of this church are the following:

- January, 1951; Organized as The Independent Presbyterian Church of Dallas by a group of Christians who desired a place of worship, fellowship, and service.
- August, 1951; received charter of incorporation from the State of Texas.
- November, 1953; purchased the west portion of the current property on Northwest Highway.
- June, 1955; changed the Church name to Northwest Presbyterian Church (Unaffiliated).
- October, 1955; completed the construction of the Chapel Building and education wing.
- December, 1962; purchased the east portion of the current property on Northwest Highway which included the “White House” annex.
- February, 1967; adopted the Faith Promise Plan as the method to be used for the missions program of the church.
- April, 1967; sold approximately eight-tenths of an acre of property on the extreme west side of the current location to the Texas Turnpike Authority for construction of the Dallas North Tollway. The funds received from this sale retired all existing debt on church property and buildings.
- October, 1970; completed the refurbishing of the Chapel Building and education wing which was Phase I of the building program adopted by the congregation in early 1969.
- March, 1971; changed the church name to Northwest Bible Church and adopted the existing church constitution.
- June, 1972; completed the construction of the Education Building and Old Gym.
- June, 1979; completed the construction of the Auditorium Building and Nursery Building.
- August, 1985; Purchased the property on which the Ministry House and Christian Life Center is located.
- November, 1988; completed the construction of the Christian Life Center.

- January, 1990; Note burning ceremony held to celebrate the final payment for the Christian Life Center.

## **Article II—Purpose & Covenant of Christian Fellowship**

### **Section 1—Purpose**

This church, under God’s direction, is a body of professing Christians joined together for the purpose of divine worship, study of the Scriptures, and Christian fellowship. In the pursuit of this purpose, we earnestly seek both individually and collectively to magnify and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, to share our faith with others thus encouraging them to accept Christ as their personal Savior, and to foster spiritual growth and maturity for all members.

### **Section 2—Covenant of Christian Fellowship**

The members of this church are in united agreement to fulfill the following covenant of Christian fellowship:

- (1) To walk together in Christian love.
- (2) To exercise Christian care and watchfulness over one another.
- (3) To pray with and for one another, sharing our burdens, sorrows and joys.
- (4) To be thoughtful and courteous to one another, to be slow to take offense, and to be quick to forgive and to seek forgiveness.
- (5) To promote harmony and spiritual growth in the church.
- (6) To exercise spiritual gifts in the work of the church.
- (7) To contribute, as the Lord directs, to the financial support of the church and its programs.
- (8) To engage regularly in personal Bible reading and prayer and to establish family devotions where possible.
- (9) To bring up children entrusted to our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
- (10) To maintain a consistent Christian testimony before the world.

## **Article III—Doctrinal Statement**

### **Section 1—The Scriptures**

We believe the Bible to be the verbally inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings, and the supreme and final authority in doctrine and practice (II Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21; John 17:17).

### **Section 2—The Godhead**

We believe in one God eternally existing in three equal persons — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who have the same nature and attributes but who are distinct in office and activity (Matthew 28:19; II Corinthians 13:14).

### **Section 3—The Person and Work of Christ**

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man, without ceasing to be God, having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful man. We believe that He accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a substitutionary sacrifice. We believe that our redemption and salvation is guaranteed by His literal physical resurrection from the dead (John 1:1,14,18; Luke 1:35; Romans 3:24-26; 4:25). We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is now in heaven, exalted to the right hand of God, where as High Priest He fulfills the ministry of intercession and advocacy for His people (Hebrews 1:3; 3:1; 7:23-25; I John 2:1-2).

### **Section 4—The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit**

We believe that God the Holy Spirit is a person who restrains evil in the world and convicts men of sin. He also regenerates those who receive Christ as Savior, baptizes them into the Church, the Body of Christ, indwells them permanently, seals them unto the day of redemption, bestows spiritual gifts on each one and fills those yielded to Him (John 16:7-11; John 3:8; I Corinthians 12:4-11,13; John 14:16-17; Ephesians 4:30; 5:18). We believe that some gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues and miraculous healings, were given as authenticating signs in the early church and were temporary (I Corinthians 14:22-24; Hebrews 2:4). We believe, however, that God answers prayer for the sick in accordance with His will (I John 5:14-15; James 5:15-16).

### **Section 5—Angels, Fallen and Unfallen**

We believe that angels are spiritual beings who were created as sinless personalities and that they occupied different orders and ranks. They presently exist in both fallen and unfallen states, the former including Satan and his angels (Hebrews 1:13-14; II Peter 2:4; Revelation 7:12). We believe that Satan, by his own choice the enemy of God and of the people of God, is the originator of sin, that he led our first parents into sin and now rules as the god of this world. We believe that he was judged at the cross and that ultimately he will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Isaiah 14:12-14; Genesis 3:1-19; Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 20:10).

### **Section 6—Creation**

We believe all things in heaven and earth were created by God and exist by His power (Genesis 1:1; Colossians 1:16-17). We believe that man was created innocent and in the image and likeness of God but that he sinned bringing both physical and spiritual death to himself and his posterity. We believe that man has inherited a sinful nature, is alienated from God, and is in need of salvation (Genesis 1:27; 2:17; 3:19; Ephesians 2:1-3).

### **Section 7—Salvation**

We believe that salvation is a gift of God and is received by man through personal faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for sin. We believe that man is justified by grace through faith apart from works (Acts 13:38-39; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-10). We believe that all true believers, once saved, are kept secure in Christ forever (Romans 8:1; 38-39; John 10:27-30).

### **Section 8—Sanctification**

We believe that sanctification, which is a setting apart unto God is positional, progressive, and ultimate. Positionally it is already complete since the believer is in Christ and is set apart unto God as Christ is set apart unto God. Since he retains his sinful nature, however, there

is need for progressive sanctification whereby the Christian grows in grace by the power of the Spirit. Ultimately, the child of God will be set apart from sin in his practice as he is now in his position in Christ when he is taken to be with Christ and shall be like him (John 17:17; II Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 5:25-27; I Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 10:10,14).

### **Section 9—The Church**

We believe that the Church, the Body and Bride of Christ, is a spiritual organism, made up of all born-again persons of this present age. We believe that the Church began at Pentecost and that a believer is placed into the Church by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Church is distinct from Israel (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:25-27; I Corinthians 12-13; 10:32). We believe that the local church is an assembly of professed believers in Jesus Christ who are voluntarily joined together in one locality for the purposes of worship, study of the Word of God, observance of the ordinances, Christian fellowship, and to be equipped for Christian service (Acts 2:42-47; I Corinthians 1:1-2; Ephesians 4:11-13).

### **Section 10—The Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

We believe that Christ instituted the ordinances of water baptism and the Lord's Supper which are to be observed by believers until He returns (Matthew 28:19-20; I Corinthians 11:23-26). We believe that by water baptism a believer is publicly identified with his Saviour; that the mode should be a matter of the individual's choice; that infants of believing parents may be dedicated to the Lord but not baptized. We believe that the Lord's Supper is a memorial of Christ's death, the elements being symbols of His body and blood. We believe that every Christian has a right to partake of the elements of the Lord's Supper but that participation should always be preceded by solemn self-examination.

### **Section 11—The Second Coming of Christ**

We believe in the personal, imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for the Church to be followed by the tribulation on earth which will culminate in the return of Christ to earth to set up His millennial kingdom (I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 3:20; Matthew 24:15-31; Zechariah 14:4-11; Revelation 20:1-6).

### **Section 12—The Eternal State**

We believe that the souls of believers in Jesus Christ do at death immediately pass into His presence, and there remain in conscious bliss until the resurrection of the body at His coming for the Church, when soul and body reunited shall be associated with Him forever in glory. We believe that the souls of unbelievers remain after death in conscious misery in Hades until the final judgment of the Great White Throne at the close of the millennium when soul and body reunited shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, not to be annihilated, but to be punished with everlasting separation from the presence of the Lord (Luke 16:19-26, 23:43; II Corinthians 5:8; Philemon 1:23; II Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 20:11-15).

## **Article IV—Membership**

### **Section 1—Qualifications for Membership**

Members shall be followers of Christ who desire to glorify God in their lives, attend the worship services, give assent to this Constitution, and affirm of the vision of the Elders. To become a member of this covenant community, an individual must make a profession of

faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior. Each applicant shall make a written statement of faith in Christ and be individually interviewed by our Elders.

### **Section 2—Types of Memberships**

Adult Membership provides all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of this church. Youth Membership is open to those below 18 years of age, but one is ineligible to vote or hold the office of Elder or Deacon. Youth Membership can be changed to Adult Membership when the individual becomes 18 years of age by having an interview with an Elder; otherwise, the membership expires.

A membership list containing Youth and Adult Members shall be maintained by the Pastors in consultation with the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders will determine appropriate methods, depending on the size of the church, for members to regularly affirm their Qualifications for Membership.

### **Section 4—Discipline**

The goal of church discipline is the restoration of an individual to spiritual health and vitality. Discipline is the responsibility of the Board of Elders which may terminate membership for heretical doctrine or conduct which mars the testimony of the church. Termination of membership will occur only after due notice and hearing have been afforded the individual and after diligent effort has been made to bring the individual to repentance. The decision of the Board of Elders is final.

### **Section 5—Termination**

Members may voluntarily terminate membership. These members may be granted a letter of good standing upon request to the Pastors; they may be reinstated upon interview by the Elders. The Board of Elders may terminate membership as a result of disciplinary action. Involuntary termination may result by members who fail to affirm their Qualifications for Membership.

## **Article V—Government**

This church, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, is an autonomous body of believers voluntarily submitting themselves to a form of government that we believe is in accordance with the Scriptures. The official offices of this church, by whom all its powers are administered, are covered in subsequent sections of this constitution. These offices shall be occupied by men who are elected by the membership of this church at a duly called and constituted Congregational Meeting. The responsibilities of these offices are also defined and described in subsequent sections of this constitution.

## **Article VI—Officers**

### **Section 1—General**

We believe that holding office in the church is by :

- (1) The calling of God by the Holy Spirit.
- (2) The conviction of the will of God on the part of the candidate.
- (3) The approval of the Board of Elders.

(4) The concurrence of God's people.

We affirm that the government of this church is representative and that the right of God's people to elect their officers is inalienable. The elected officers in this church shall be Pastor and Elders. The appointed officers shall be Executive Pastor, Deacons and members of the Ministerial staff. All appointments shall be made by the Board of Elders.

## **Section 2—The Pastor**

### A. Description of Office

The Pastor is the spiritual leader of the church and has oversight of the spiritual life of the church in conjunction with the Board of Elders. The Pastor should be fully prepared for his ministry with both college and seminary degrees or their equivalent and shall be ordained. He should live a consistent Christian life ruling his own house well and having a good testimony with non-Christians.

### B. Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Pastor include:

- (1) Praying for and with the congregation.
- (2) Feeding the congregation spiritually by reading, expounding, and preaching the Word of God.
- (3) Administering the ordinances.
- (4) The educational program.
- (5) Visiting the people, especially those with particular needs.
- (6) Serving as an official member of the Board of Elders and as an ex-officio member of all other boards and committees.

### C. Election

This church may have a Pastor, Associate Pastor, Assistant Pastor, or Interim Pastor. A Pastor shall be elected by vote of the congregation. An Associate Pastor and an Assistant Pastor shall be appointed by the Board of Elders. An Interim Pastor shall be a minister secured by the Board of Elders to carry on the Pastoral duties when the church is without a Pastor. When the church desires to elect a Pastor, the Board of Elders will appoint a pulpit committee consisting of six members representative of the whole congregation, three of whom must be from outside the Board of Elders. When the committee is ready to report, a Congregational Meeting will be called to act on the recommendation. A two-thirds majority of the ballots cast (including absentee ballots) shall be required for election of the Pastor.

### D. Removal from Office

When a Pastor shall tender his resignation to the Board of Elders, they shall call a Congregational Meeting to consider the resignation, if the resignation is involuntary in nature. A majority of the voting members present is required to accept his resignation. In the case of an action by the Board of Elders to dismiss the Pastor, the same procedure will be followed. If the resignation is voluntary in nature, the Board of Elders shall consider his resignation and a Congregational Meeting to accept his resignation is not required.

### **Section 3—The Board of Elders**

#### **A. Description of Office**

The Elders are the chosen representatives of the congregation and govern, discipline, and oversee the spiritual interests of this church. According to I Timothy 3:1-7, the Office of Elder shall be occupied by men of maturity, exemplary lives, good reputation, sound judgment, and who rule their own house well. A candidate for Elder must be a member of this church for at least a year prior to his nomination for this office.

The Board of Elders shall be composed of the Pastor and all current Elders. The Board shall normally meet at least once a month. Sixty percent of the membership constitutes a quorum. At the first meeting of the new church year, the Board will elect a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary to serve for a period of one year. The Chairman will then appoint Committee Chairmen to represent the Board in the various activities of the church.

#### **B. Responsibilities**

The responsibilities of the Board of Elders include:

- (1) Directing the affairs of the church.
- (2) Receiving and dismissing members.
- (3) Administering the ordinances.
- (4) All organizations and their programs.
- (5) Making provision for the pulpit supply.
- (6) Exercising discipline.
- (7) Praying for and with the people and watching over their spiritual and physical needs.
- (8) Visiting the membership, giving counsel and comfort to those with special needs.
- (9) Promoting missions at home and abroad.
- (10) Executing on behalf of the church, deeds, notes, deeds of trust, releases, and any other instruments of contracts as may be necessary to comply with the mandate of the congregation as to real property belonging to, or being acquired, improved or sold by the church.
- (11) Being responsive to all other matters that affect the well being of this church.

#### **C. Election**

Each Elder is elected for a one year term by the congregation at a duly called and constituted Congregational Meeting. These elections normally occur at the annual congregation meeting held near the end of June each year; however, vacancies may be filled at any time during the year at a specially called Congregational Meeting. The congregation shall, upon recommendation of the Board of Elders, determine the number of Elders to be elected each year.

A candidate for nomination to the office of Elder will be examined by at least two current Elders to determine:

- (1) His personal knowledge and comprehension of the Word of God especially as it relates to the qualifications for an Elder.

- (2) His personal philosophy concerning the purpose of the local church, his understanding of his responsibilities as a Christian and as an officer of the church, and his concept of the role of Christian education in the church.
- (3) His agreement with the constitution of this church including the doctrinal statement.
- (4) His ability and willingness to serve and participate actively as an Elder, to attend faithfully the services and programs of the church, and to support the various programs and activities of the church.
- (5) His ability to teach and his desire to cultivate this ability for the Lord.

The Board of Elders will include in the Congregational Meeting notice, their nominations for Elders. If any member of the congregation desires to submit a name(s) for consideration, such names should be given the Board of Elders no later than two weeks prior to the called Congregational Meeting. Nominations cannot be made from the floor since the Board of Elders must examine the recommended nominees to insure that they fulfill the qualifications for the Office of Elder.

The method of voting shall be the same as outlined in Article VII of this Constitution. A simple majority is required for election.

#### D. Ordination and Installation

The Board of Elders will conduct the installation ceremony for newly elected Elders. The ceremony will also include ordination for those Elders that have not been previously ordained. The format and content of this ceremony is included in the By-Laws section of this constitution. An Elder, once ordained, shall not be divested of his ordination when his term expires.

#### E. Removal from Office

No person can be removed from the Board of Elders except for just cause as determined by the Board of Elders. If an Elder misses two consecutive regularly scheduled meetings of the Board of Elders, the Chairman will discuss the matter with him. If three consecutive meetings are missed without reasonable excuse, this will be considered evidence that he is unable to serve and he will be released from his duties and a vacancy shall be deemed to exist. The Board of Elders will act upon the written resignation of an Elder whenever submitted. An Elder may also be removed as a result of the disciplinary action referred to in Article IV—Section 4 of this constitution.

## **Article VII—Congregational Meetings**

### **Section 1—Annual Meeting and Special Meetings**

The annual Congregational Meeting shall be held as close to the end of June as is practicable for the election of officers, the approval of budgets, and the consideration of other matters for the forthcoming church fiscal and operating year which begins on July 1. Special Congregational Meetings shall be called by the Board of Elders whenever they deem it necessary for the best interest of the church or when requested to do so in writing by a quorum of one-fourth of the regular members of the church. In the case of a meeting called at the request of the members, the said request must state exactly the purpose of such a meeting and all points must be in agreement with all rules pertaining to the government of this church; otherwise, such request shall not be binding upon the Board of Elders.

## **Section 2—The Meeting Call**

The call for a Congregational Meeting shall come from the Board of Elders by giving public notice of at least one week for special Congregational Meetings and by June 1, for the annual Congregational Meeting. No business shall be transacted except that stated in the call. In the case of a meeting called at the request of the members, at least thirty days must elapse from the time the request is presented to the Board of Elders to the time of the meeting.

## **Section 3—Voting**

The right to vote is restricted to regular members of this church 18 years of age and older. A quorum of one-fourth of the qualified voting members must be present to conduct official business; however, in no case shall this quorum be less than fifty members. The moderator shall determine the method of voting except that if ten or more members request a secret ballot, the vote must be by secret ballot. Unless stated otherwise in this constitution a simple majority is required for the adoption of any resolution or motion. Absentee voting is available to members who are unable to attend a Congregational Meeting due to illness, absence from the city, or other valid reasons as determined and approved by the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders will supervise the absentee voting process and will act upon all requests for absentee voting. Instructions concerning absentee voting procedures will be issued by the Board of Elders prior to each Congregational Meeting.

## **Section 4—Parliamentary Procedure**

The Chairman of the Board of Elders shall be the moderator of all Congregational Meetings. If he is unable to preside, the Board of Elders shall appoint one of their members to preside over the meeting. The Secretary of the Board of Elders shall act as the secretary for Congregational Meetings. In the transaction of business, the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall be used in all cases not covered by this constitution.

## **Article VIII—Ordination**

Since it is our hope that Spirit-filled men will be called by God from among us to proclaim the Gospel of the grace of God, such men may be given a commission to preach and to administer the ordinances by an ordination council convened for this purpose. The council will normally be composed of the Pastor and such members of the Board of Elders and guest examiners as the Board of Elders may determine. The applicant shall be examined by the council concerning his understanding of and agreement with the doctrinal statement of this church, his Scriptural qualifications and call to the ministry and any other areas which the council may specify. Upon a favorable decision of the ordination council, the applicant shall be recommended for ordination. The time and form of the ordination ceremony shall be determined by the Board of Elders.

## **Article IX—Dissolution**

No part of the net earnings of this corporation shall ever inure to the benefit of any donor, member, director, or officer of the corporation or any private individual and no donor, member, director, or officer of the corporation or any private individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any of the corporate assets. Upon dissolution, any assets of the corporation shall be distributed to the organizations being supported by the missionary program of the church at that time. The share of each organization shall be the same proportion that it receives of the total missionary budget of the church for that year. In the

case of individuals being supported by the missionary program of the church, the proportional amount shall be paid to their mission boards provided they qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law), as the Board of Elders shall determine.

### **Article X—Amendments**

This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the qualified voting members present at a Congregational Meeting called for that purpose. Copies of the proposed amendment(s) must be distributed to all regular members at least thirty days prior to the Congregational Meeting at which they will be considered.

### **Article XI—Missionaries**

This church believes in a strong and active missions program supported by the congregation through the Faith Promise concept of giving. Individual missionaries, missionary organizations, seminaries, Bible Schools and Colleges, and other Christian organizations that subscribe to the doctrinal statement of this church are eligible for full or partial support by the program; however, we believe that it is desirable and beneficial for an individual or organization to have more than one source of financial and prayer support. Each individual and organization receiving support from the program will be required periodically, at least every two years, to reaffirm their assent to the doctrinal statement of this church.

The total amount of support to be provided by the Missions program for each year will consist primarily of the Faith Promises made by the congregation and additional support from the General Fund recommended by the Missions Committee and approved by the Board of Elders. The annual budget detailing the individuals and organizations to be considered for support and the amount to be received by each will be prepared by the Missions Committee and submitted for congregational approval at the annual Congregational Meeting held each June. A contingency fund will normally be included in the annual budget for the addition of new missionaries beyond those specified in the annual budget, for the support of special projects, and to provide for emergency situations that may arise during the year. This contingency fund will be controlled and disbursed by the Missions Committee and they also have the authority to redistribute any funds that may become available due to terminations or resignations of any individual or organization during the year. If the need arises, the support of any individual or organization may be terminated; however, sufficient notice (normally three months) shall be given to the individual or organization affected. The result of such action will be reported to the congregation for information. The Missions Committee will conduct all business in accordance with policies established by the Board of Elders.

Special designated gifts may be sent through the church without going through the above procedure; however, the church shall not accept gifts for secular organizations or for organizations whose doctrinal position is not in harmony with the doctrinal statement of this church.

## **1.02 By-Laws**

### **Article 1—Ordination Ceremony for Elders**

The newly elected Elders will normally be ordained and installed in the presence of the congregation during a Sunday worship service on either the first or second Sunday in July. The presiding Minister shall state in a concise manner the warrant and nature of the office of the Elder together with the character to be sustained and the duties to be fulfilled. He shall then propose the following questions to the candidates:

- (1) Do you believe the Bible to be the Word of God, the supreme and final Authority in doctrine and practice?
- (2) Do you accept the doctrinal statement of this church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and do you promise that if, at any time, you find yourself in disagreement with any of the fundamentals of this doctrinal statement, you will, on your own initiative, make this fact known to the Board of Elders?
- (3) Do you agree with and will you support the constitution of this church?
- (4) Do you accept the office of Elder in this church, and promise faithfully to perform all the duties thereof and to endeavor by the grace of God to live a consistent Christian life before the world and to set a worthy example before the church of which God has made you an officer?
- (5) Do you promise to promote the harmony, spiritual growth, and purity of this church?

The Elder having answered in the affirmative, the Minister shall then address the following question to the members of the church:

“Do you, the members of this church, receive this brother as an Elder and promise to give him all honor, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord to which his office entitles him, according to the Word of God?”

The members of the church having answered in the affirmative, the Minister shall set the candidates apart with prayer and the laying on of hands of the Elders. The Minister shall then say:

“I now declare that (the name of each candidate) has been elected, ordained, and installed as Elder in this church.”

### **Article II—Officers Appointed By the Board of Elders**

#### **Deacons**

##### **Description of Office**

Deacons shall be appointed by the Board of Elders to key areas of responsibility in the Operating and Ministry Committees of the Church.

##### **Qualifications**

The Office of Deacon according to I Timothy 3:8-10, shall be occupied by men of spiritual maturity, exemplary lives, good reputation, sound judgment, and who rule their own house well.

### **Article III—Auxiliary Bodies**

Members of this church may, at any time, request approval from the Board of Elders for the establishment of additional organizations.

### **Article IV—Ministerial Staff**

The Board of Elders will appoint Ministers as required to provide pastoral care, teaching, counseling, and administration to the congregation. The number and types of Ministers required will vary from time to time, depending on church growth, financial resources available, and planned activities.