

# Country Oaks Baptist Church

20915 Schout Road - Tehachapi, CA 93561

Constitution & By-Laws

Revised January 2013

# Country Oaks Baptist Church

## PREAMBLE

We declare and establish this Constitution and By-Laws to express the principles of our faith and to govern this body in an orderly manner. We must give first place to the work of the Kingdom of God and freedom to do all things by divine guidance of the Holy Spirit and in accordance with the Word of God. To this end the details of the church ministries and administration will be expressed in the ministries and Procedures Manual (MAP) As compiled through the Board of Elders.

## SECTION 1: NAME

The name of this church is Country Oaks Baptist Church. Our principal office for the transaction of business is located at Tehachapi, California.

## SECTION 2: PURPOSE

Our objective, as a dynamic church, is to show love which testifies that we are Christ's disciples. Our love for Christ is shown by obedience and faith. Our love for fellow believers is shown by service. Our love for the unsaved is shown by outreach.

This objective will be evident when we as a body:

- **Exalt the Savior** by providing a biblical climate for worship that includes preaching, music, prayer, testimonies, ordinances and offerings.
- **Actively equip the saints** by instruction and encourage to consecrate themselves to Spirit led service and obedience to God and through discipleship, to discover, develop, and apply their spiritual gifts.
- **Evangelize the unsaved** through obedience to the Great Commission at home and abroad, by leading unbelievers to faith in Christ and identification with a local body of believers.

## SECTION 3: STATEMENT OF DOCTRINE

We recognize and believe in the authority of the Bible as the Word of God. We do not recognize creeds issued by man as authoritative and binding, but we do offer in humility and sincerity the following statement of doctrine:

1. The Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the divinely inspired Word of God and infallible in their original writings. They are perfect and complete, the only written revelation of God to man and authoritative in all matters. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2Peter 1:20-21; Galatians 1:11-12; 1Peter 1:10-12; Luke 24:44.

2. There is only one God who as creator of the universe manifest Himself in three persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Genesis 1:1-2,26; Deuteronomy 6:4; Ephesians 4:6.
  - **God the Father**, He is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. He reveals Himself as a merciful and loving Father seeking fellowship with mankind. John 5:19-26; 2Corinthians 6:18; Revelation 21:3.
  - **God the Son**, He is revealed as Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God; born of a virgin, He is both God and man sent “to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10 KJV) John 1:1-2, 14,18; 3:16; Luke 1:35; Matthew 1:18-21.
  - **God the Holy Spirit**, He is sent forth from the Father to indwell the saints, to be their counselor and comforter, to empower them for service, and to seal them to Himself. His work is to convict the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. He bestows spiritual gifts upon the believers for the perfecting of the saints. John 16:5-16; Acts 1:8; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:7-14.
  
3. Man was created in the image of God without sin. He voluntarily fell from his sinless state and sin has passed on to all mankind alienating all from God resulting in physical and spiritual death. Genesis 1:27; 2:7; 3:1-19; Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23; 6:23; Revelation 20:11-15.
  
4. Because mankind is hopelessly lost, we are in need of a Savior. Salvation has been provided through the substitutionary death of Jesus upon the cross. Through the shedding of His blood we have the forgiveness of sin. Salvation is a gift entirely by the grace of God. Through repentance and faith in His death and resurrection we have a living hope and “through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1Peter 1:3-5 NIV); 1John 1:7-9; 5:10-13; Hebrews 10:5-25; Revelation 1:5-6; 5:9-10.
  
5. Christ’s Church is composed of all born-again believers who are voluntarily united together for:
  - a. Worshiping God. John 4:23-24; Hebrews 10:25.
  - b. Ministering to the saints. Galatians 6:2; John 13:14; 1Peter 4:10
  - c. Evangelizing and discipling. John 21:15-17; 1Corinthians 11:23-25; Acts 1:8
  - d. Keeping the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Matthew 28:18-20; 1Corinthians 11:24-26
  - e. We believe in, and practice, baptism by immersion.
  
6. At the close of this age all of mankind will be judged. The believers will be rewarded for their acts of righteousness and the unbelievers will be judged for their deeds and unbelief. “Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him.” (Hebrews 9:28 NIV) Daniel 12:1-3; 1Corinthians 3:9-17; Revelation 20:11-21:8.

7. Marriage is an ordinance of the Church that has been established and instituted by God from the dawn of the human race, as described in the early chapters of Genesis. It has been codified in the Mosaic Law, and the Old Testament prophets compared it to the relationship between God and His people.

Jesus Christ our Lord explained the original intention and core elements of marriage. When quoting the writings of Moses, Christ reminded us that “a man shall leave his father and his mother, and cleave unto his wife, that the two shall become one flesh.”

The Apostles give explicit instructions on this union, teaching that marriage is a typology of Christ and His Bride, the Church. As such, the Church views marriage as a profound spiritual institution established by God.

In accordance with Holy Scripture, Country Oaks Baptist Church defines “marriage” as the exclusive union of one man and one woman in which such a union is a lifetime commitment, as described in the Scriptures. A civil government’s sanction of a union will be recognized as a legitimate marriage by this Church only to the extent that it is consistent with the definition of “marriage” found in these By-Laws and Statement of Doctrine.

Ref: Genesis 1:27; 2:18-24; Malachi 2:13-16; Matthew 19:3-12; I Corinthians 7:1-40; Ephesians 5:21-33; I Peter 3:1-7

8. Human Sexuality -Legitimate sexual relations are exercised solely within marriage as described in Holy Scriptures. Hence, sexual activity outside of marriage (referred to in the New Testament as “porneia” in Greek) including, but not limited to adultery, premarital sex (fornication), homosexuality, and pedophilia are inconsistent with the Bible and the Church. Further, lascivious conduct, transgender behavior, and the creation, distribution, and/or viewing of pornography are incompatible with the Biblical witness and the teachings of the Church. Reference: Exodus 22:16-19; I Corinthians 6:9-11 and 15-20; 7:1-12; Ephesians 2:1-3; 4:17-19; 5:1-7; Hebrews 13:4; I Peter 1:13-16; 4:1-5.
9. Affirmation - Every pastor, elder, member, ministry leader or worker, volunteer, or employee shall affirm the Country Oaks Baptist Church Statement of Doctrine, and shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent therewith.

## **SECTION 4: CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

### **The Office of the Elder**

The Elders shall act as the trustees of this church and shall be vested with executive power to manage the affairs of the church, both temporal and spiritual, as has been granted them by the Holy Scriptures, the laws of the State of California and/or the government of the United States and the Constitution and By-Laws of the church. The Elders shall carry out their ministry to the church as servants with all humility before God and man. The office of Elder is charged with the oversight of the church and conducting of the affairs of the church in an orderly and timely manner ; to proclaim the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and to be guardian of the doctrinal truth that is taught through the church. The Elders are to augment the ministry of the Pastors with due vigilance but not usurp or hinder them in their duties. This shall be accomplished by administering the church and

supervising or delegating authority to others to carry out the ministries the church may deem necessary. The Board of Elders both individually and collectively, shall be accountable to God and the church for the responsibilities given to their charge and also for their personal deportment.

The authority is vested in the office, rather than the individual, and when an individual Elder fails to qualify for the office, his term as Elder is terminated. The scriptural basis for this office and officers is:

- Authority: Hebrews 13:17
- Administration: Acts 11:30; 1Timothy 1:3-11; 5:17; 1Peter 5:1-3
- Personal: 1Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9

## **BY-LAWS FOR ELDERS**

1. “Due to the call of God to serve as an Elder the term of office will last until such time that he:
  1. Is biblically or morally disqualified. OR
  2. Is unable to perform the duties of the office.

There will be a mandatory annual review of each Elder by the remainder of the existing board. This review will take into consideration the qualifications found in 1Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The purpose of the annual review will be to establish Biblical qualification and continued sense of calling for each Elder.”

2. Candidates shall be chosen on the basis of Scriptural qualifications set forth in 1Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The number of candidates chosen shall be equal to the number of vacancies. The Board of Elders shall, 120 days prior to the annual meeting of the church, strongly encourage members to submit the names of men they recommend appointed to the office of Elder and Deacon. Over prayerful consideration of all names presented, the Board of Elders shall make known to the congregation, 30 days prior to the annual meeting, the ones they recommend for vacancies. Should any member of the congregation have reason based on fact as to why a candidate should not be appointed, the member should discuss the matter with the appointee, according to Matthew 18:15-20.

If there is no consensus, the matter shall be addressed to the presiding Board of Elders. After due consideration by the Board of Elders the name may be withdrawn as deemed advisable. (Hebrews 12:14-15)

If a name is withdrawn, the Board of Elders shall present another candidate for the office. Should there be a vacancy on the Elder board the candidate selection process shall be the same as the process for the annual meeting. The selection process may occur at any time of the year at the discretion of the Board of Elders.

3. The Board’s first order of business, at their regular meeting following the annual meeting of the church, shall be the selection of a new chairman and secretary for the current year. The chairman shall be chosen from among the laity serving as Elders, not the paid staff. The secretary

shall keep accurate records of the Board's proceedings and present written quarterly and annual reports to the church.

4. There shall be continual classes, or as often as needed, regarding the office of Elder and it shall be open to all members of the church. However, if a person is aspiring for the office of Elder, the class is mandatory. The class may be taught by any person qualified to teach, at the discretion of the Board of Elders. There shall also be times of instructions for Elders, taught by the Pastor, or whom he may select.
5. The Elders will approach decisions in a prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit and consensus of the Board. If there is disagreement on an issue and not resolved by subsequent discussion, the decision will be postponed for more study and prayer until consensus is reached. Acts 15:1-29
6. Should an Elder not be able to fulfill his duties in office, he shall submit a letter of resignation to the Board, including the date of termination.
7. Should any member of the congregation have reason based on fact as to why an Elder has failed in the qualifications for the office, that member should discuss the matter with the Elder, according to Matthew 18:15-20. If it cannot be resolved then the member with two or more witnesses must present the matter to the presiding Board of Elders. 1 Timothy 5:19-21
8. Upon receipt of the accusation, the Board of Elders shall review the accusation and give the Elder the opportunity to reply. The Elder shall be suspended from the Elder Board until the matter is resolved. In the event dismissal of the Elder is necessary, the Board shall call for a special meeting of the church to present the accusations and findings. (1 Timothy 5:20) However, if the measure of discipline is less severe than dismissal, a special meeting of the church is optional, at the discretion of the Board. Above all, the proceedings should be handled in love with the object of all proceedings being the restoration, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of all involved (Matthew 18:15-20).
9. There shall never be less than three Elders. The total number of Elders shall be determined by the need of the church and the discretion of the Spirit. The Senior Pastor shall serve as a permanent Elder. Other qualified Pastors and paid staff may serve as Elders; however, pastoral and paid staff on the Elder Board shall not vote on the final determination of salaries for either class of employee. It is recommended the minimum number of Elders be seven including the Senior Pastor.
10. Regular Board meetings shall have two sessions. The first shall be open to the members of the congregation to express their thoughts, desires, and questions to the Elders. The second session will be a closed session for the Elders to conduct their normal business.

## **SECTION 5: PASTORAL STAFF**

### **Senior Pastor:**

1. The Senior Pastor must be a man of true Christian experience and established character. He

shall qualify for the office according to the standards of 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9. He shall, upon accepting the call, become member of this church and be in full accord with its statement of doctrine. He shall be a member of the Board of Elders and, by virtue of his office, an ex-officio member of all committees.

2. When there is a vacancy in the position of Senior Pastor, the Elders shall immediately appoint a Pulpit Council consisting of at least two Elders, one Deacon, and two members of the congregation in good standing. The Council shall interview candidates and make recommendation to the Board of Elders. They in turn shall present the candidate to the congregation for evaluation and consideration. The Board of Elder's will upon adequate consideration by the congregation poll the church membership by ballots as input into the final decision to call a candidate as Pastor. A two-thirds majority is necessary to proceed in the selection process.
3. Should the Senior Pastor voluntarily vacate his office, four weeks notice shall be given to the Board of Elders in writing. Should any member of the congregation have any reason based on fact as to why the Senior Pastor has failed in the qualifications for his office, the procedure for Elder review shall be followed. If the church decides to vacate the office, four weeks notice shall be presented by the Board of Elders. In either event, any accrued vacation shall be paid beyond the four weeks notice.
4. To call a candidate to a position on the pastoral staff, the Elders shall present the candidate to the congregation for evaluation and consideration. Upon adequate consideration by the congregation, the Elders will poll the church membership by ballot as input into the final decision. Other members of the Pastoral Staff shall be subordinate to the Senior Pastor. Their employment and termination shall be the responsibility of the Board of Elders.

## **SECTION 6: DEACONS**

The Deacons shall be chosen in the same manner as the Elders. Their term of office will be consistent with that of Elder. It is recommended that the number of Deacons be determined by a ratio of one Deacon to ten households. The Deacon ministry shall include, but not be limited to widows or otherwise disadvantaged persons, such as the sick and the needy, and to prepare and serve the Lord's Supper. An annual review of each Deacon will be performed in a manner consistent with the annual Elder review.

## **SECTION 7: MEMBERSHIP**

All applicants must be in agreement with the statement of Doctrine. Any individual who publicly and verbally professed personal faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, has subsequently submitted to believers baptism and is willing to submit to the authority of this church in matters of spiritual life and discipline, may be eligible to become a member of the church. Eligible candidates for membership will meet with the Pastor or Elders to complete the membership process (questions & answer on the Constitution & By-Laws and presented to the congregation). A member shall be considered in good standing when there is a continued behavior to live in conformity with the scriptures and this Constitution and By-Laws, having demonstrated a conscientious effort to attend the services of the church and contribute to its support as God has prospered. When a member has failed to fulfill this responsibility, without valid

reason, then a person's name shall be transferred to the inactive roll and voting rights suspended. The Board of Elders shall make a conscientious effort to restore inactive members to fellowship and service. After one year has elapsed and the member has not manifested an attempt to improve the status of membership, the inactive member will be deleted from the church roll. The member shall be notified of the action in writing.

## **SECTION 8: MEETINGS**

The annual meeting of the church shall be held in December. Accordingly, the pre-annual meeting will be held in November. The time, place and occasion for both meetings shall be determined by the Board of Elders, and due notice given to the church

The purpose of this meeting shall be to review the church ministries of the past year, to preview the ministries for the coming year and to complete the confirmation process of Elders, Deacons, and budget. The Board of Elders may call special meetings as circumstances dictate with due notice given to the church a minimum of seven (7) days in advance. When a question of parliamentary procedure and conduct arises, Robert's Rules of Order shall be followed.

## **SECTION 9: PROPERTY RIGHTS**

This church will have the power to buy, own and sell real property in its name. All properties of the church will belong to the membership who abide to this Constitution & By-Laws. Should conditions arise under which the church cannot continue to exist, the church property shall be given to a non-profit, evangelical, Christ-centered cause. This shall be at the discretion of the remaining members and no assets shall go to individual members of the church.

## **SECTION 10: AMENDMENTS**

Amendments to this Constitution & By-Laws shall be made by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast. ANY MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING MAY propose amendments, BUT AMENDMENTS must be presented in writing to the Board of Elders at least 30 days before being presented to the congregation for discussion. AMENDMENTS MUST BE PRESENTED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH AT LEAST 30 DAYS PRIOR TO ANY OFFICIAL VOTE ON THE MATTER. THE PRESENTATION MAY BE THROUGH BULLETIN INSERTS, ELECTRONIC MEDIA, PULPIT ANNOUNCEMENTS, OR ANY SIMILAR FORM OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP. The vote shall be taken at the next special or annual meeting with those members in good standing and who are of legal voting age eligible to vote. The vote shall be by ballot.