

**Constitution and By-Laws for
All Saints Presbyterian Church
Originally Adopted June 1998**

PREAMBLE:

We, the members of All Saints Presbyterian Church of Ft. Worth, Texas (ASPC), do hereby establish and submit ourselves to the following by-laws as a means to govern the affairs of this church.

ARTICLE I. Name:

This church body shall be known as All Saints Presbyterian Church, of Ft. Worth, Texas.

ARTICLE II. Aims, Standards and Objectives

ASPC is a body ("corpus," corporation) of Christian believers who are united for the chief purpose of glorifying the Triune God by striving to proclaim and obey His revelation as found in the primary standard of the Old and New Testament Scriptures. As the inspired rule of faith and life for the Christian, the Scriptures are recognized by ASPC as the unchallengeable authority and supreme judge to which all religious controversies or creeds, as well as all opinions and regulations of men, must be subordinate.

- a) ASPC, standing within the distinct religious history of the Reformed churches of the Protestant Reformation, recognizes the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms (originally adopted in Scotland in 1647 and 1648 respectively), and the Three Forms of Unity (The Belgic Confession of Faith, The Canons of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism) as its formal creeds and secondary standards of doctrine and life.
 - b) ASPC is a member of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches [CREC], the Constitution of which is included as a part of the ASPC Constitution [see appendix A].
2. Should any conflict arise between these by-laws and any of the above standards (or between the above standards themselves), the controlling authority for resolution of the conflict shall be, in this order:
 - a) Scripture,
 - b) the confessions and catechisms,
 - c) the by-laws.
 3. Further, the session, which is to adjudicate and resolve alleged conflicts (or controversies pertaining to such allegations), followed by appeals to Presbytery and/or Council shall always be the first courts of adjudication, before any recourse is made to civil courts.
 4. The general objectives of ASPC are to make disciples of all nations, promote submission to God's Word in all areas of human life and endeavor, nurture and educate believers and their households in the Christian faith, administer the sacraments and moral discipline within the church, and lead the congregation in united worship, encouragement, fellowship, and charitable service.
 5. ASPC has a special interest in working with other Christian churches and groups throughout our community and the world. We welcome opportunities to labor with them in common goals in the name of Christ, and we look forward to entering into informal and/or formal fellowship and association with like-minded churches who have common aims, standards, and objectives.

ARTICLE III. Determination of Members

1. Members shall be those individuals who have been received by the session on the basis of one or more of the following:
 - a) a credible profession of faith,
 - b) a transfer of membership from a Christian church,
 - c) lawful baptism in the name of the Triune God.

2. Procedure for receiving new members:
 - a) New converts to the Christian faith shall be examined by the session as to their profession of faith, and upon their baptism and church covenant vows they shall be received into the membership of ASPC.
 - b) Persons applying for membership who are coming from other Christian churches may transfer their membership, provided they are leaving their former church in good standing (i.e., not under any church discipline). The Session of ASPC may inquire concerning this status, request a letter from the transferring church, or notify the transferring church that the person has moved their membership.
 - c) Once membership is established at ASPC, a person shall remain a member and under the oversight, rule and care of the session of ASPC unless removed by order of the session on the basis of death, moral discipline, or proper transfer of membership to another Christian church.
3. Procedure for transferring membership to another Christian church.
 - a) Regardless of the reason for desiring to transfer membership, the session should be notified of such intention and a meeting should be arranged between the member and the session to discuss the circumstances.
 - b) A reasonable amount of time (determined by the session) shall be granted to the member seeking transfer of membership to another Christian church in order to locate and accomplish a proper transfer of membership.
 - c) Members of ASPC must continue to recognize their obligations as members of ASPC; they must regularly report to the session of ASPC as to their progress in accomplishing their transfer of membership as well as their current spiritual condition and practices; and they must be willing to communicate with the session upon request.
 - d) Failure to comply with this procedure is grounds for church discipline.

ARTICLE IV. Expectations of Members

1. Members of ASPC shall devote themselves to both the private and public means of grace including the regular attendance of all appointed church services (e.g., Sunday School and Worship Services), fellowship meetings, special meetings or conferences, private and family devotions with Bible reading and prayer, and the showing of hospitality to the saints.
2. Members of ASPC shall devote themselves to the service of their fellow Christians and church members, sharing both material and spiritual blessings with one another.
3. Members of ASPC shall, in obedience to the Word of God and as a token of God's gift to us, give cheerfully and regularly a tithe (10%) of their increase to the ministry and labor of this church.
4. Members of ASPC shall conduct themselves with godly attitude, speech and conduct toward their fellow church members, being slow to take offense and ready to resolve conflicts according to the instruction of Scripture (Cf. Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15-20).
5. Members of ASPC shall recognize, respect, and submit to the session of GCC in obedience to Hebrews 13:17.

ARTICLE V. The Calling and Conduct of Congregational Meetings

1. All meetings shall be conducted following the guidelines of the attached abridged version of *Robert's Rules of Order* [See appendix B].
2. Scheduling and Notice of Meetings:
 - a) Heads of households meetings shall be at the call of the session of the church.
 - b) Public notice of any such meeting shall be made at worship services on the two Sundays preceding the meeting or by circular letter posted ten days in advance of the meeting.
3. Regular and Special Meetings:
 - a) A regular meeting of the heads of households shall be held at least once every calendar year (date set by the session) at which any relevant and legitimate business of the members may be transacted.
 - b) The session shall call special meetings of the heads of households when they deem it best to do so or upon written request by one-fourth of the voting heads of

households. At specially called meetings no business shall be conducted except that which is stated in the notice of the meeting.

4. Quorum and Voting in Meetings:
 - a) Only male heads of households, who have been members for at least six months, and who have been approved and granted voting rights by the session, shall be entitled to vote at its heads of households meetings. Female members that do not have male voting representation shall communicate their concerns and opinions by way of the session.
 - b) There shall be no minimum quorum for the transacting of business at a duly called meeting of the heads of households.
 - c) Legitimate motions made at a meeting of the heads of households shall pass by a simple majority, unless otherwise stipulated in these by-laws.
 - d) Eligible voters who are present but abstain from voting shall not be counted for the purposes of determining voting percentages.
 - e) The election of elders and deacons shall always be by signed ballot.
 - f) Voting by proxy on the election of church officers shall be permitted by special approval of the session based on the determination of legitimate need (e.g., illness, job, etc.).
5. Presiding Officer and Secretary
 - a) One of the church officers (elder or deacon) shall serve as presiding officer in meetings of the heads of households. The presiding officer has authority to keep order in and direct the operations of the meetings.
 - b) The presiding officer of a meeting of the heads of households may vote in the decisions of that body.
 - c) The session shall appoint a secretary of ASPC who shall serve in the meetings of the heads of households. If he is absent or unavailable, the session shall appoint another person to serve in his place.
 - d) The secretary shall keep a correct record of all business transacted at the meetings of the heads of households. Toward that end the minutes of the meeting shall be approved by the heads of households at the beginning of the next business meeting. The secretary shall preserve such minutes with the records of the session and grant extracts from them when requested.

ARTICLE VI. Prerogatives of the Members

1. The business which may be transacted by the voting heads of households at its duly called meetings shall include and not be limited to the following:
 - a) reviewing the yearly report of all financial transactions by the session and offering non-binding advice to them in matters pertaining to the budget, purchases, and/or sale of church property.
 - b) taking action to call men to serve as elders (pastors, teachers, or evangelists), or deacons for the congregation,
 - i) by nominating members of the congregation to serve as either deacons or elders and, or
 - ii) (when necessary) calling qualified men from outside the congregation, and
 - iii) upon approval of the qualification of such candidate(s) by the session, voting on the election of such officers.
 - c) taking action to remove an officer or officers from their position(s) in the congregation, either by:
 - i) voting to have an elder or deacon divested of his office; such a vote must pass by a three-fourths majority of those voting, and it may be taken only after having been petitioned by one-fourth of the voting heads of households members of the congregation, announced in the call of a congregational meeting, and the challenged officer(s) has (have) been given opportunity to defend his (their) continuance in the office; or
 - ii) voting to request and/or concur with the resignation of an elder or deacon from his ministerial charge in the congregation.

- d) approving the secretary's minutes of the heads of households meeting.
- e) From time to time the session or the deacons may call for a poll (a non-binding vote) of all members, or some special portion of the membership (e.g., the youth, the men, or the women), in order to gain input from them concerning a particular matter.
- f) Membership in any formal association with other churches shall require a two-thirds majority vote of the voting heads of households and the approval of the session.

ARTICLE VII. Church Discipline

One of the marks of a true church of Jesus Christ is that it maintains discipline. The purpose of church discipline is, through biblical means, to prevent, restrain, or even to remove any evil that may threaten the church and to promote and encourage that which is good and glorifying to God. Church discipline, in all its forms—preventative, formative, corrective, and final, is the line of demarcation between the church and the world; without it, we cannot distinguish between the two.

1. Preventative Discipline: This aspect of church discipline guards the entrance into the church and seeks to prevent unbelievers from becoming a part of the local assembly (Cf. Act 9:26-27).
 - a) The church is established for the feeding and care of believers and their households.
 - b) The session will examine and determine those who are eligible for baptism, church membership, and the Lord's Table.
2. Formative Discipline: Once a person has become a member of the church, he immediately comes under the primary work of the church, which is formative discipline.
 - a) This aspect of church discipline is the means whereby church members are instructed and trained in the Christian faith by,
 - i) both public and private means,
 - ii) through both formal and informal methods,
 - iii) with the goal of presenting every person mature in Christ (Colossians 1:28-29).
 - b) Words (God's and then man's) are the primary means of formative discipline;
 - i) through private counsel, instruction, rebuke and admonition,
 - ii) through the public ministry of the Word.
 - iii) This is the routine work of the local church (Ephesians 4:11-16).
 - c) It is under this formative discipline of the local church where disciples
 - i) are given more of the Word of God by which they are built up in the faith (Acts 20:28);
 - ii) are to be sanctified and cleansed by the washing of the water and the Word (Ephesians 5:25-27);
 - iii) are to be helped to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior (2 Peter 3:18);
 - iv) are rebuked and reprovved and called back to the path of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:1-2);
 - v) are stimulated to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24);
 - vi) are taught to observe the commands of God (Matthew 28:19);
 - vii) are equipped for the work of service (Ephesians 4:12);
 - viii) are equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:17);
 - ix) and where they become workmen who need not be ashamed because they can rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).
3. Corrective Discipline: A third aspect of church discipline is corrective discipline whereby the church applies lawful (i.e., biblical and constitutional) pressure to a wayward member
 - a) By means of:
 - i) informal action (e.g., counsel, reproof, rebuke, etc., cf. 2 Timothy 4:1-2)
 - ii) and formal action (e.g., public rebuke or censure, cf. 2 Thess. 3:14-15),
 - iii) and hoping to see the wayward member restored to a place of conformity to Christ's rule (Galatians 6:1).
 - b) If the church has been faithful in maintaining preventative and formative discipline,

then the need for formal corrective discipline will be rare.

- i) Corrective discipline is to be applied by the session, as they deem appropriate for the case, in those situations where formative discipline has failed to accomplish its purposes.
 - ii) The session must perform this duty with love and humility for the good of the wayward member, the good of the local church in general, and for the sake of Christ's glory (Cf. Matthew 18:15-20).
4. Final Discipline: (excommunication), A final aspect of church discipline, which is the church's responsibility to perform, is the removal of a member by judicial action. The church has no choice but to obey Christ in these matters (Matthew 18:17).
- a) In the exceptional cases where this discipline becomes necessary,
 - i) a church member who persistently refuses to yield to the formative and corrective discipline of the church is declared, by judicial action of the session, to be excommunicate, which means they are no longer members of the church and are considered to be unbelievers.
 - ii) Final discipline decisions may be formally appealed by:
 - a) making a written request to the session for a court of appeals.
 - b) once requested, this appeal is irrevocable and the court's decision is final.
 - c) Appeals must be in accordance with the constitution and by-laws of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches. [See Appendix A]
 - iii) Final church discipline has as its goal the elimination of the unrepentant person from the church (1 Corinthians 5:9-13), with the hope of restoring the spiritual life of one who has fallen into habitual sin (1 Corinthians 5:5).
 - iv) Likewise, the church must be faithful to forgive and receive back anyone who repents (Matthew 18:21-22), and grant appropriate restoration in the church upon such repentance as directed by the session (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).
 - b) The procedure to be followed depends upon the nature of the offense; however, the following procedure shall be followed in most cases, unless otherwise directed by the session:
 - i) The directions of Matthew 18:15-16 shall be followed in their proper order.
 - ii) If restoration of fellowship is not accomplished by these means, then formal charges shall be filed with or by the session (Matt. 18:17-18).
 - iii) All formal charges shall be stated in terms of God's law (the Bible) and shall be supported by citing which portions of God's law have been violated.
 - iv) After a fair and impartial hearing of all witnesses accessible and all facts ascertainable, the court of the session shall make a judicial ruling in the case by unanimous decision.
 - v) Any decision by the court of the session to impose a judgment of final discipline on a member shall be announced to the congregation.

ARTICLE VIII. Church Officers

1. Congregational Officers and Corporate Directors
 - a) The Congregation: The officers of the congregation in their capacity as functioning church ministers are the congregation's duly elected, ordained, and installed ministers, elders and deacons. The congregation shall always (so far as it is possible) provide for itself a minimum of two ministers and/or elders, thus constituting a "session." When the session meets to consider formal judicial action, it is proper to refer to the session as the "court of the session."
 - b) The Corporation: In distinction from the above, the session of the corporation (that is, the congregation acting in any capacity pertaining to property, business transactions, or civil and corporate law) are its Directors. These shall be the ministers and elders, however many have been elected by the members of the congregation, but not less than two.
 - c) Terms of Office:
 - i) Upon election, ordination and installation, the officers of the congregation

shall hold office for their lifetimes, unless removed from such office as stipulated below.

- ii) Officers of the congregation shall surrender or be removed from their office(s) under any of the following conditions:
 - a) resignation of an office by an elder in which the congregation and session concur;
 - b) dismissal of an elder which is requested by the heads of households by a three fourths majority vote.
 - c) excommunication from membership in the congregation by judicial action of the court of the session.

2. Ordination of Officers:

a) Doctrine of Ordination:

- i) Those who have been recognized by the church to have been called and equipped by God to hold office in the church are to be ordained by the session.
 - a) The session may examine or appoint a board of examination from among the heads of households, and in addition, appoint board members from among ordained ministers and elders from other congregations, for the examination of ministers, ruling elders deacons, and missionaries.
 - b) In addition to this examining board, ministers/pastors must also either be examined and approved by an examining committee of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches, or else have their previous ordination approved by the CREC. The local church shall hold all ordination credentials.
- ii) Ordination is the authoritative admission of one called to an office in the Church, accompanied with examination, prayer and the laying on of hands.
- iii) Only males shall be admitted to ordination and church office.
- iv) As every ecclesiastical office, according to the Scriptures, is a special charge, no man shall be ordained unless it be to the performance of a definite work.
- v) The offices requiring ordination are:
 - a) Minister/Pastor
 - b) Ruling Elder
 - c) Deacon
 - d) Missionary/Evangelist

b) Trainees for the Gospel Ministry:

- i) Men, who show promise and interest in the work of the eldership, pastoral ministry, or missionary shall present themselves to the session for examination and consideration to be placed under the care and training of the session.
- ii) Upon receiving the sessions' approval, the trainee shall be presented to the congregation of ASPC and recognized as one who has been placed ~~himself~~ under the guidance and training of the session.

c) The Ordination and Installation of Officers:

- i) Ministers, Ruling Elders and Missionaries:
 - a) A candidate for ordination to the office of minister, ruling elder, or missionary shall be examined and approved by 2/3 of the session and the examining board (and for ministers, also presbytery concerning):
 - (1) His walk with Christ, especially his personal character and family management (based on the qualifications set out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9).
 - (2) His knowledge of Bible content, theology, the sacraments, church history, and the principles and rules of the government and discipline of the church.
 - b) If a candidate is denied approval by the session and examining board (or presbytery):
 - (1) a list of deficiencies or areas of concern, stated in biblical

relevant cases, to the direction of the deacons. The session may establish, remove or transfer specialized ministries within the congregation, (e.g., educational ministries, works of charity, etc.) as well as boards to manage such operations, which are dedicated to a select line of service within the church under the authority of the session.

- vi) The actions and policies of the session shall be available to the congregation.
- b) Deacons:
 - i) The responsibilities of the deacons shall be those duties delegated by the session of ASPC.
 - ii) Diaconal ministries include, but are not limited to, showing compassion and mercy toward saints and strangers who are in need or distress; collecting and disbursing funds for the relief of the needy; visiting, praying with, and/or meeting the physical needs of the sick and grieving; organizing and encouraging church members to engage in such services to others; and caring for the property, grounds, and buildings owned or used by the congregation.
 - iii) Deacons shall review salaries and benefits of church officers and employees annually and make recommendations to the session for any needed adjustments.
- 4. Treasurer:
 - a) The treasurer (and/or assistant treasurer) shall be responsible to the session in all financial matters pertaining to the church. He/she shall have custody of, and be responsible for all church funds and securities and shall deposit all such funds in the name of the congregation in such banks, trust companies, or other depositories as shall be selected by the session. He/she shall receive and, when needed, give receipt for contributions of value (or monies due and payable), to the congregation. He/she shall disburse the funds of the congregation as directed by the session, taking proper vouchers for such disbursements. He/she shall keep and maintain adequate and correct records of the congregation's business transactions, including accounts of its assets, liabilities, receipts, and disbursements. He/she shall give:
 - i) upon their request, a report to the session covering revenues, expenditures and balance on hand.
 - ii) an annual financial report of receipts and transactions to the members of the congregation for the previous year.
 - b) The fiscal year for the congregation shall begin the first day of the calendar year and end on the last day of the calendar year.

ARTICLE IX. The Sacraments

- 1. Baptism and the Lord's Supper:
 - a) It is the duty of the session to prudently judge, after careful examination, the qualifications of those who apply for baptism or admission to the Lord's Supper.
 - b) Baptized members with good standing in Christian church shall be approved and admitted to the Lord's Supper.
- 2. Baptism:
 - a) When unbaptized persons apply for membership in the church, they shall be examined by the session and make a profession of their faith, and be baptized before admission to membership.
 - b) The form of baptism shall be by sprinkling, or pouring of water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Ordinarily, Christians who received Trinitarian baptism in Christian church shall be accepted as having received legitimate Christian baptism.
- 3. The Administration of the Lord's Supper:
 - a) The Lord's Supper, (AKA: Communion or Eucharist), is observed weekly, except for extraordinary circumstances as determined by the session.
 - b) Ministers and elders administering the Lord's Supper shall instruct or make notification to those present concerning who is qualified to partake of the Lord's Supper, pointing out that those who under any church discipline are not admitted to the Lord's Supper.

ARTICLE X. Amendments

Amendments to this Constitution may only be made in the following manner:

1. Approval of the amendment by unanimous consent of the Elders.
2. A first and second reading at two consecutive Heads of Household meetings, with review and comment from the congregation.
3. Formalization and ratification by unanimous vote of the Elders.

APPEDICES:

- **Appendix A:** Constitution and By-Laws of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals
- **Appendix B:** Abridged version of *Robert's Rules of Order*
- **Appendix C:** Church Covenant
- **Appendix D:** Baptismal Vows
- **Appendix E:** Book of Confessions
- **Appendix F:** Pastoral Confidentiality