

Our Constitution  
Revision 2, February 2016

Preamble

We, the members of Elk Ridge Baptist Church, Stephenville, Texas, establish the following articles to which we voluntarily submit ourselves. The articles of this constitution shall serve as the bylaws of the organization in accordance with the laws of the State of Texas.

Article 1 - Name

The name of this church shall be Elk Ridge Baptist Church; we are a non-profit organization.

Article 2 - Purpose

Together we purpose to worship and glorify God, and we are determined to pursue the lost, proclaim the gospel and produce mature followers of Jesus Christ for his glory.

Article 3 - Values

*Community*

We believe that church should be a safe, sharing, hope-filled community whose members are well trained to serve others, particularly those who are hurting. We will always value people higher than programs, land or buildings (Matthew 11:28-30; Acts 2:44-47; Romans 15:13; Ephesians 4:3).

*Excellence*

Since God gave his very best—Jesus, our Savior—we too will maintain the highest standards of excellence in all that we do for his glory (1 Peter 1:19; Colossians 3:17, 23-24; Luke 16:10).

*Grace*

We are motivated to serve our gracious God from hearts of love and gratitude rather than guilt and fear (Romans 6:14; Ephesians 2:8-9; 3:17-19; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; 2 Timothy 1:7).

*Harmony*

We believe that God does not value one gender, ethnicity or social class above another, and we will seek to worship and live in peace together with all people (Galatians 3:28; 1 Samuel 16:7; James 2:1-9; Ephesians 3:6; Romans 12:16a).

*Instruction*

We believe that practical, biblical teaching and preaching will produce a mature and healthy church as people actively respond in obedience. We want to know the deep things of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Corinthians 2:10).

*Missions*

We will support worldwide missions with our prayers, encouragement and financial help, and we will seek to send out short-term and career missionaries to the harvest fields (Matthew 9:36-38; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 13:1-3).

*Outreach*

All lost people matter to God and we will persistently pursue them with the gospel in a spirit of respect and unconditional love. We will not seek to take away members from existing, Bible-believing churches (Luke 19:10; 2 Peter 3:9; Romans 2:4b).

*Prayer*

Believing that God answers prayer, we will rely on personal and group prayer in the planning and execution of all church ministries, and we will pray regularly for the salvation of the lost and the spiritual growth of believers (Matthew 7:7-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Philippians 4:6-7).

### *Relevance*

We will evaluate our ministries regularly in order to remain culturally relevant and in order to maximize ministry efficiency and effectiveness, yet we will never compromise our doctrine (1 Chronicles 12:32; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

### *Reproduction*

We will seek to reproduce ourselves by encouraging and supporting the development of new churches whether near or far (Mark 1:38; Acts 1:8).

### *Service*

We believe that all members possess God-given passions, talents and spiritual gifts and that each should be actively involved in the service of the church for the benefit of all (1 Corinthians 12:4-7; Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:4-8).

### *Stewardship*

We believe that everything we are and have, including our talents, time and treasures, are given to us by God and that we are to invest them for his kingdom and glory. Regarding tithes and offerings, we are committed to give regularly, cheerfully and generously according to our ability in response to God's grace in giving us his Son (1 Chronicles 29:11-16; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 16:1-2; 1 Peter 4:10-11; 2 Corinthians 8:3, 7-9, 12; 9:7-11).

### *Worship*

We believe that our worship should be directed at God. It is not a stage performance or a form of entertainment, but rather an act of personal sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2; John 4:23-24).

### Article 4 - Beliefs

**The Bible:** We believe that God inspired the sixty-six original writings of the Old and New Testament and that they contained no errors. The great Bible translations we have today, therefore, serve as our final authority for living (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Psalm 12:6).

**God:** We believe that God has always existed in tri-unity. God is one, yet he exists in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These three are equally God, and they differ only in the specific roles they assume (Deuteronomy 6:4; John 10:30; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 1:3-14).

**Jesus:** We believe that Jesus has always existed as God (John 1:1-3; Hebrews 1:6-8); that he was physically born of a virgin in perfect humanity (John 1:14; Matthew 1:20-23); that he lived a sinless life on earth (Hebrews 4:15); that his death on the cross was sufficient for all sinners (Romans 5:8; 1 John 2:2; John 3:16-18); that his physical body rose from the dead to live again (1 Corinthians 15:3-8); that he presently intercedes for believers from heaven, serving as our Advocate against Satan, our accuser (1 John 2:1; Hebrews 7:25; Revelation 12:10); and that he will personally return to the earth to judge unbelievers and bless believers (John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; Matthew 25:31-34, 41).

**The Holy Spirit:** We believe that the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4). He is, therefore, a person and not simply a force. He convicts men of their sin (John 16:8-11). He regenerates men, for they are unable to regenerate themselves (John 3:5-6; Titus 3:5). He places believers into union with Christ and with all other believers (Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:13). He continuously indwells those who have believed in Jesus (Romans 8:8-9; John 14:16-17). He seals believers, marking them as children of God and preserving them for heaven (Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30). He fills and controls yielded believers day by day (Ephesians 5:18), and he teaches believers God's truths found in the Bible (1 Corinthians 2:11-13; John 14:26).

**Man:** We believe that every part of man is marred by sin, including his mind, will and emotions. Man is unable, therefore, to become righteous on his own, needing instead for God to make him righteous (Romans 3:23; 5:12; Isaiah 64:6; Titus 3:5).

Salvation: We believe that salvation is received only by God's grace through man's faith. It is a free gift that man cannot earn by his own good deeds (Ephesians 2:8-9). Salvation is received by personally believing that Jesus died in our place so that we can be forgiven of the sin that would otherwise keep us out of the presence of a holy God (John 1:12; Romans 10:13). As new Christians we are changed by the Holy Spirit and immediately welcomed into the family of God (2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:16). God sometimes disciplines his children, but we can never lose our status as children or our gift of salvation (John 5:24; 10:27-29; Hebrews 12:5-8). We are to serve God out of love, and our good deeds are the reflection of an unseen faith (James 2:17; John 14:15).

The Church: We believe that the true church consists of those who have trusted in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior (Ephesians 5:23). On earth the church gathers locally for instruction from the Bible, worship, fellowship, service, prayer and evangelism (Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:24-25).

Ordinances: We believe that in obedience to God the church should observe two ordinances instituted by Jesus: water baptism and the Lord's Supper. These ordinances are outward symbols of an inner reality. They do not earn God's grace or salvation (Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:35-38; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

Spiritual Gifts: We believe that the Holy Spirit immediately gives every new believer one or more spiritual gifts to be used in God's service (1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:7-13). We believe that certain lesser gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1, 5, 19), though commonly expressed in the formative years of the early church, are not normative expressions of the Spirit's work today (Hebrews 2:3-4).

Satan: We believe that Satan, also called Lucifer, is real. He rebelled against God; brought sin into the universe; tempted angels and man to rebel with him against God; and now works with limitations to oppose God here on earth. God will punish him in the end, and Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire forever (Job 1:6-7; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Isaiah 14:12-15; Matthew 4:1-11; 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

Angels: We believe that angels are spiritual beings created by God to serve him, praise him and serve the needs of believers (Hebrews 1:13-14; Revelation 7:11-12). We believe that there are some angels who serve God and some who rebelled against him. Those angels who rebelled now serve Satan, and they will suffer his same future judgment (Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4; Luke 15:10).

The Future: We believe that Jesus will personally return for believers in order to take them to heaven and also that he may come at any time. We believe that he will come for us sometime before a 7-year, worldwide tribulation and that he will return with all believers following this period of tribulation to set up a 1000-year, earthly kingdom over which he will reign as King (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Zechariah 14:1-9; Revelation 19:11-16; 20:1-6; 1 Thessalonians 1:10). Following this millennium all believers will live eternally with God in their perfect resurrected bodies, and unbelievers will be separated from him in everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:46; John 5:28-29).

#### Article 5 - Affiliation

This church maintains the right to govern its own affairs, independent of any denominational control.

#### Article 6 - Government

The government of this church is vested solely in its board of elders which is responsible for oversight of all church matters, including spiritual, physical and legal matters. The board, therefore, functions as a board of directors or trustees in matters pertaining to the acquisition, sale or holding of properties and to the care of physical assets. All decisions made by the board are final, and the board is vested with the authority to alter or amend this constitution and to resolve questions of interpretation regarding this constitution, amendments or any issues not provided for in this constitution. The board shall also have the authority to appoint all individuals, committees or ministry teams for transactions of business or ministry, including a church secretary and treasurer. The board will communicate regularly and clearly with the congregation, especially before and after key decisions, taking their opinions and concerns into careful consideration and utilizing congregational referendums or binding votes as desired.

#### Article 7 - Membership

Membership into this local church is open to anyone who has received God's free gift of salvation. Members are expected to agree with the doctrinal beliefs and ministry goals of the church. Members are received by the board of elders and may be dismissed from the church at their own request or by prayerful consideration of the board, particularly if they are no longer active in the church or following church discipline as outlined in Scripture (Matthew 18:15-17). The aim for all church discipline is restoration and reconciliation, and as such restoration will follow repentance. Restored members should then be received in accordance with 2 Corinthians 2:6-8. All church leaders, ministry leaders and teachers must be members of the church.

#### Article 8 - Board of Elders

The board of elders shall consist of the senior pastor and any other men who meet the character qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9; who have completed all membership requirements; and who are active in the ministry of the church. Offices for the board may be assigned as needed and all board members are eligible to vote. Elders are appointed to the board by the board after patient prayer and a careful examination into their character and theology. Church members are encouraged to recommend names of men for consideration by the board. Candidates for the elder board shall also be presented to the congregation for prayer and examination before final approval by the board. All board members are appointed to one-year terms, beginning each March, after which they are eligible to succeed themselves if appointed by the board to serve a new term. The dismissal of any board members, including the pastor and pastoral staff, follows the same outline as for members in general and shall be handled with great care. Any board member may resign from this ministry by notifying the board in writing. Board decisions may be made by acclamation or by ballot. All decisions are made by a consensus of all standing board members. Meetings shall be established without objection by resolution in recorded minutes or by ample oral or written notice. All key church leaders, ministry leaders, teachers or otherwise serve at the discretion of the board following board approval. Special committees or ministry teams are formed, reshaped or dissolved at the discretion of the elder board. The elder board is likewise authorized to produce a policy manual to clarify any matters or policies not specifically noted in this document. All church policies are created, edited or abolished by a consensus of the majority of elder board members.

#### Article 9 - Deacons

The deacon ministry of the church is not an official board. Deacons serve as helpers to the elders in order to serve the needs of the church. They must meet the character qualifications specified in 1 Timothy 3:8-13; must have completed all membership requirements; and must be active in the ministry of the church before their appointment. The deacons have responsibility for any and all elder-delegated ministry. They may choose a moderator, leader or other offices for the purpose of carrying out their delegated responsibilities, but they are not to enact any policy or philosophy of ministry of their own. Deacons are appointed by the elder board to one-year terms after which they are free to succeed themselves if appointed to a new term by the board. Church members are encouraged to recommend names for consideration by the elder board. Candidates for the deacon ministry shall also be presented to the congregation for prayer and examination before final approval. The dismissal of any deacon follows the same outline as for members in general and shall be handled with great care. Any deacon may resign from the ministry by notifying the elder board in writing.

#### Article 10 - Pastors

The senior pastor is directly accountable to the elders. His duties and the duties of other pastoral staff shall be determined by the board of elders. As a practical matter, other staff pastors, while also accountable to the board of elders, are likewise accountable to the supervision of the senior pastor in organizational and operational matters.

#### Article 11 - Finances

This church will maintain and operate according to a detailed budget.

#### Article 12 - Dissolution

In the event the church body is dissolved for any reason of its choosing, the title to all property and all assets following the satisfaction of any indebtedness shall be distributed promptly to one or more churches or missions organizations that qualify as 501(c)(3) and that are closely aligned with the charter beliefs' statement of this church, which are then authorized to use the remaining assets at their own discretion. No donor, member or church officer shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any of the assets of this church without the approval of the designated organizations.