

REFORMED BAPTIST NETWORK CONSTITUTION

Adopted at the RBNNet Founding Conference

November 15, 2016

I. The Establishment of the Association

A. The Name of the Association

The name of the Association is the Reformed Baptist Network (RBNNet).

B. The Purpose of RBNNet

The purpose of RBNNet is to glorify God through fellowship and cooperation in fulfilling the Great Commission to the ends of the earth.

II. The Standards of RBNNet

A. Articles of Faith

We hold wholeheartedly to the inerrant and infallible Word of God as found in the sixty-six books of the Bible (this being our sole authority and final source of faith and practice). We embrace and adopt the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 (1689 LBCF) as a faithful expression of the doctrine taught in the Scriptures. Substantial subscription to this Confession is the doctrinal position of RBNNet. (See Appendix A.)

B. Articles of Association

This Constitution is the ultimate governing standard of RBNNet. Therefore, actions of RBNNet must comply with it. Any article in this Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of representatives present and voting at an officially called business meeting, when the proposed amendment has been distributed in writing to every member church at least sixty days before the vote is taken. Amendments shall be incorporated into this Constitution after they have been approved.

C. Policies

As needed, each standing committee of RBNet will adopt, amend, or delete policies to govern the activities of RBNet, to be ratified by a simple majority of the full-member churches present and voting at the General Assembly (GA).

III. The Authority of RBNet

A. Source of Authority

RBNet exists by virtue of the corporate authority of its full-member local churches.

B. Limitation of Authority

1. All cooperation in or contribution to RBNet efforts by member churches shall be strictly voluntary. RBNet will make no demands of a member church beyond its principles of association.
2. RBNet has authority to determine whether its membership shall be given to or withheld from an applicant church. It also has power to dismiss a member church. RBNet cannot take anything from a local church but that which it gives to the church, namely, membership in RBNet.
3. RBNet affirms the principles of conflict resolution spelled out in the 1689 LBCF 26.15.

C. Authority to Conduct Business

RBNet has authority to establish bank accounts in order to receive and disburse funds for accomplishing its purposes and functions. RBNet may own property and conduct business through its elected officials or appointed committees.

IV. Membership in RBNet

A. Scope of RBNet

RBNet shall be international in its scope. Since the vast majority of member churches are in the English speaking parts of the globe, RBNet communications shall be in English.

B. Membership

RBNet has two levels of membership; full membership and associate membership:

1. Full membership is reserved for churches which meet the stated requirements outlined below including Appendix A, Confessional Subscription and Appendix C, Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality.
2. Associate membership is open to churches as well as individuals meeting the associate membership standards outlined below, including Appendix B, Associate Member Statement of Faith; and Appendix C, Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality. Associate members are granted all the privileges of full membership with the following exceptions:
 - a. Voting privileges in RBNNet decisions/actions either in the GA or electronically
 - b. Voting membership on RBNNet committees. (Associate members may serve on committees in an advisory role.)
 - c. Sponsorship or recommendation of churches and individuals applying for RBNNet membership, missionaries, support missionaries, indigenous pastors, church planters, military chaplains, special projects and urgent situations. (However, associate members may present kingdom efforts to the GA for support with the co-sponsorship of a full member church. See V. B. 1.)
 - d. Presenting agenda items to the GA
 - e. Submission of nominations for official RBNNet positions and serving on the Nominating Committee. (However, associate members may submit nominations for non-voting, advisory positions on committees.)
 - f. Any other functions in this Constitution or in the RBNNet Policy Manual which are specifically restricted to full member churches

C. Requirements for Membership Application

1. Full Membership

Churches applying for full membership in RBNNet must meet the following conditions:

- a. Duly constituted as a church with at least one officer.
- b. Subscription to the 1689 LBCF (See Appendix A, Confessional Subscription).
- c. Agreement to abide by the constitution and policy manual of RBNNet.
- d. Be recommended by at least one current full-member church.

- e. Willingness to contribute financially to the general fund of RBNet as the Lord prospers their work.
- f. Commitment to active involvement in the RBNet General Assembly.

2. Associate Membership

Associate membership shall be open to churches and individuals when the following conditions are met:

- a. Churches applying for membership must be duly constituted (See Application for Membership).
- b. Those applying for individual membership must be a member of a duly constituted church, be involved in a recognized ministry, and have the consent of the leadership of their local church.
- c. A church or individual must be recommended by at least one current full-member church.
- d. Affirmation of RBNet associate membership statement of faith (Appendix B).
- e. Agreement to abide by the constitution of RBNet (excepting subscription to the 1689 LBCF).
- f. Commitment to not proselytize or become contentious about their differences with the 1689 LBCF.

D. Termination of Membership

- 1. A church or individual may withdraw from RBNet at any time by means of a letter to the Membership Committee. This letter, in its entirety, shall be immediately forwarded to the entire full and associate membership of RBNet.
- 2. A member church shall be removed from membership automatically upon dissolution of church.
- 3. Situations may arise wherein a church no longer meets the requirements of full membership status. Such a church may be moved to Associate status, or removed from RBNet completely by three-fourths vote of the full member churches. The process shall be the same for the removal of associate churches.

4. Individual associate members shall be removed from membership automatically upon death. They shall likewise be removed if their sponsoring church rescinds their sponsorship, their local church removes consent, or their membership is terminated according to the procedures above.
5. A church or individual shall always retain the right to reapply after termination, according to normal application procedures.

V. The Privileges and Duties of Member Churches of RBNet

A. Privileges and Duties of Full-Member Churches

1. Cooperation in Kingdom endeavors in accordance with the vision statement of RBNet.
2. Churches will communicate with and pray for one another regularly.
3. The giving and reception of the conscientious commendation of other member churches.
4. Each church shall have one church officer as a voting messenger at the GA.
5. Officers of member churches may serve as voting members of RBNet committees.
6. Willingness to financially contribute to the general fund of RBNet as the Lord prospers their work.
7. In matters of unresolved conflict within a member church, the church ought to follow the directives of 26.14 and 26.15 of the 1689 LBCF. In such situations a privilege of RBNet membership is ready access to the counsel of like-minded churches. In matters of unresolved conflict between RBNet churches, these churches must seek the mediation of fellow RBNet member churches.

B. Privileges and Duties of Associate-Member Churches and Individuals

1. Cooperation in Kingdom endeavors in accordance with the vision statement of RBNet. They may be given a platform for presenting kingdom endeavors to RBNet for support, though requiring the co-sponsorship of a full-member church.

2. Associate-member churches and individuals will communicate with and pray for all full and associate-member churches and individuals and will likewise receive their fellowship and prayers.
3. Associate-member individuals and officers of associate-member churches may serve as non-voting, advisory members of committees.
4. Associate-member churches and individuals are expected to attend the annual GA.

VI. The Administration of RBNet

A. General Assembly (GA)

1. Calling of Meetings

Messengers from member churches will convene at least once a year. Ordinarily notice will be given to all member churches as to time, place and purpose at least ninety days in advance. Prior to the meeting, member churches shall receive copies of any agenda to be proposed and names of nominees for the standing and or *ad hoc* committees. Emergency sessions may be called by one of the standing committees, in which case all member churches must be notified at least thirty days in advance.

2. Representation at Meetings

The GA is a representative assembly of the member churches. Churches are encouraged to send as many messengers to the GA as possible. Each full-member church is entitled to one vote, but may appoint up to four messengers for the purpose of discussion. All messengers must be present or past officers of the church they represent. Supported missionaries, indigenous pastors, chaplains, the Coordinator, individual associate members and up to four messengers from each associate member church, will be allowed to speak on the floor of business meetings.

3. Conduct of Meetings

RBNet business shall be conducted according to the document, "Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance (based on *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* by Alice Sturgis)," found in the Policy Manual.

Any full-member church may bring any agenda item to the floor of the GA. Members are encouraged to first work through standing committees, and present all agenda items to the GA Planning Committee in advance.

More than fifty percent of the full member churches must have messengers present to constitute a quorum at a business meeting of RBNet.

4. Responsibilities of the RBNet business meeting
 - a) Election of standing and *ad hoc* committee members and Coordinator.
 - b) Reading and approval of minutes
 - c) Approval of financial reports
 - d) Admission or exclusion of member churches
 - e) Approval of amendments to the Constitution
 - f) Adoption of budgets to fund the work of RBNet
 - g) Adoption and ratification of policies relating to the work of RBNet
 - h) Other business arising from our mutual love and concern for each other and the glory of God.

B. Electronic Voting

1. Any standing committee may refer urgent items of business to the churches for electronic vote.
2. All such items shall allow a minimum of two weeks for response.
3. Electronic votes will require the approval of 60% of all full-member churches.
4. An online discussion board will be established for the purpose of dialogue regarding such urgent items of business. Access to the discussion board will be provided to all full and associate members.
5. In the case of controversial issues, any full-member church can make a motion that electronic motions be tabled until the GA. The motion to table will be voted on electronically.
6. The Chairman of the upcoming GA (or if he is unavailable, the Vice Chairman of the upcoming GA) will be in charge of carrying out duly called-for electronic votes in accordance with the Constitution and the Policy Manual.

C. RBNet Officers

1. The ruling body of RBNet shall be made up of the voting representatives of the full-member churches.
2. *Ad hoc* committees may be appointed at the direction of RBNet, for the performance of specific tasks on behalf of RBNet.
3. RBNet may employ a Coordinator and such support staff as necessary.
4. All minutes of all standing and *ad hoc* committees shall be distributed to all full and associate members.

D. Incorporation

1. RBNet will incorporate in an appropriate state.
2. The four standing committees of RBNet will be the Missions Committee, the Membership Committee, the Personnel and Finance Committee, and the General Assembly Planning Committee.
3. For purposes of legal documentation filed with governmental agencies, the four corporate officers of RBNet will consist of the chairmen of the four standing committees. These officers will have no duties or authority beyond the stated purposes of their appointment.

E. Dissolution

In the event of dissolution, no member church or individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any assets of RBNet. Any assets of RBNet at the time of dissolution shall be used to pay any outstanding debts. Any remaining assets shall be distributed to Christian 501(c)(3) organizations chosen by the remaining full members at the time.

Appendix A. Confessional Subscription for Full Membership

Christ's church is by definition a confessing church (Jude 3), and the common confession of our churches is the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 (1689 LBCF). This document has a rich history, not simply of theological precision, but as the doctrinal foundation from which great missionary efforts have been launched. The convictions it expresses are key to partnership in evangelism, discipleship, church polity, and other Great Commission objectives. The full member churches of the Reformed Baptist Network (RBNet) already possess a common expression of these convictions in the document to which we all already subscribe.

However, the methodology of our subscription is paramount. Confessional subscription is no guarantee of true unity. Nor can unity within RBNet be guaranteed by minimizing or multiplying confessions. Unity within RBNet is not established upon common subscription alone; but also involves the cultivation of healthy relationships, mutual trust, and laboring together in love for common kingdom objectives.

Full membership in RBNet requires substantial subscription to the system of doctrine expressed in the Confession, which is a good and faithful summary of the Scripture. Since the infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself (1689 LBCF 1.9), when there is a reservation about the true and full sense of the wording of the 1689 LBCF, RBNet encourages transparency in a humble and charitable spirit. Recognizing that terms may be defined differently, what RBNet means by substantial subscription is confession of the doctrines expressed in each chapter of the 1689 LBCF, yet with liberty and charity over minor matters of wording, application and nuance not essential to those doctrines as a whole.

Any reservations or exceptions must be expressed in the RBNet membership application and approved by full member churches meeting in general assembly.

Appendix B. Reformed Baptist Network Associate Membership Statement of Faith

(This document is based on an updated and modified version of the 1858 “Abstract of Principles”.)

I. The Scriptures

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by inspiration of God, and being inerrant, are the only sufficient, certain and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience.

II. God

There is but one God, the Creator, Preserver and Ruler of all things, having in and of himself, all perfections, and being infinite in them all; and all creatures owe to Him the highest love, reverence and obedience.

III. The Trinity

In the unity of the Godhead, there are three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; each fully God, and yet the Godhead is one and indivisible; each with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

IV. Providence

God from eternity, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events; but not in any manner to be the author or approver of sin, nor to violate the free agency or responsibility of created beings.

V. Election

Election is God’s eternal choice of some persons to everlasting life—not because of anything foreseen in them, but by his mercy alone in Christ. As a result of God’s choice, the elect are called, justified and glorified.

VI. The Fall of Man

God originally created man in His own image, and free from sin; but, through the temptation of Satan, he transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original holiness and righteousness; by which his descendants inherit a corrupt nature, wholly opposed to God and His law, are under condemnation, and, in bondage to sin and Satan, have lost all moral ability to convert themselves, prepare themselves, or do any spiritual good acceptable to God.

VII. Christ, the Mediator

Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is the divinely appointed mediator between God and man. Being eternal God, the second person of the Trinity, He took upon Himself human nature, yet without sin. He perfectly fulfilled the Law, suffered, and died upon the cross for the salvation of sinners. He was buried, and rose again on the third day, and ascended to His Father to sit at His right hand and make intercession for His people. He is the only Mediator, Prophet, Priest and King of the Church, and Sovereign of the Universe.

VIII. Regeneration

Regeneration is a work of the Holy Spirit by which the hearts of those dead in trespasses and sins are brought to life, and their minds are enlightened to spiritually understand, savor, and savingly embrace by faith the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to love and practice holiness. It is a work of God's free and special grace alone. It is the duty of all who hear the gospel to instantly believe on Christ without looking for any qualification from within. However, none will do so apart from regenerating grace.

IX. Repentance

Repentance is a gracious gift of God by which a person being, by the Holy Spirit, made aware of the evil of his sin against God and of the mercy of God freely offered to him in Christ, does with godly sorrow and hatred of his sin turn from it to God seeking to walk before him in unqualified obedience.

X. Faith

Saving faith is the belief, on God's authority, of whatsoever is revealed in His Word concerning Christ; accepting and resting upon Him alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life. It is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and is accompanied by all other saving graces, and leads to a life of holiness.

XI. Justification

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal of sinners, who believe in Christ, from all sin, through the satisfaction that Christ has made; not for anything wrought in them or done by them; but on account of the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith.

XII. Sanctification

Those who have been regenerated are also sanctified, by God's word and Spirit dwelling in them. This sanctification, having begun in conversion, is progressive through the continuing supply of divine strength by which the children of God are enabled to grow in grace and pursue holiness in the fear of God.

XIII. Perseverance of the Saints

Those whom God has elected in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never totally nor finally fall away from the saving grace of God, but will persevere to the end; and though they may fall, through neglect and temptation, into sin, whereby they grieve the Holy Spirit, bring reproach on the Church, and temporal judgments on themselves, they shall yet be renewed again unto repentance, and be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

XIV. The Church

The Lord Jesus is the Head of the Church and in Him is invested supremely all power for its government. According to his commandment, Christians are to join themselves with local churches in which the duties of preaching the word, the administration of the ordinances, and discipline are carried out.

XV. Ordinances

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of positive and sovereign institution, appointed by the Lord Jesus, the only lawgiver, to be continued in His church to the end of the world.

XVI. Liberty of Conscience

God alone is Lord of the conscience; and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to His word, or not contained in it. However, liberty of conscience must at all times be governed by an earnest desire to walk in the fear of God, a loving regard for the conscience of fellow brothers in Christ, a sensitivity for the unregenerate and regard for the health of one's own soul.

XVII. The Resurrection

The bodies of mankind after death will return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God — the righteous to rest with Him; the wicked to be reserved under darkness to the judgment. At the last day, the bodies of all the dead, both just and unjust, will be raised.

XVIII. The Judgment

God has appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world by Jesus Christ, when everyone shall receive according to his deeds; the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment; the righteous, into everlasting life.

Appendix C: Statement on Marriage, Gender and Sexuality

In addition to the LBCF statement on marriage, chapter 25, RBNet makes the following statements:

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. (Gen 1:26-27.) Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of God's created order.

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. (Gen 2:18-25.)

We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. (1 Corinthians 6:18; 7:2-5; Hebrews 13:4.)

We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. (1 Corinthians 7:8-9; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.)

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, polygamy and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God and are required by our biblically framed convictions to declare and uphold this standard as occasion arises. (Matt 15:18-20; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 3:2, 12.)

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10). We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31).

Therefore, we require that in order to preserve the function and integrity of RBNet it is imperative that all members and all persons employed by RBNet in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality (Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:22).