

REFORMED BAPTIST NETWORK CONSTITUTION

Adopted at the RBNNet Founding Conference

November 15, 2016

Amendment(2nd ¶ under I. B.) adopted by electronic vote

April 6, 2018

Amended by electronic vote November 16, 2023

Amended by electronic vote September 3, 2024

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.

RBNNet is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, educational or scientific purposes under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

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

1. Nature.

This Constitution is the ultimate governing standard of RBNNet. Therefore, actions of RBNNet must comply with it.

2. Deficiencies.

Only when we must obey God rather than the provisions of this Constitution or where God's providence makes it impossible to follow the provisions of this Constitution, may its requirements be disregarded (Acts 5:29; 18:21; James 4:13-15). If such a case arises, the Consulting Committee including the Coordinator should be immediately informed. The Consulting Committee shall as soon as possible (and no later than a month after first becoming aware of this concern) determine which standing committee will be responsible for responding to this concern.

The assigned standing committee will as soon as possible (and no later than a month after being assigned this concern) inform the full member churches of the concern which has been raised, including specifying which provision(s) of the constitution is involved. In an emergency situation, the assigned committee may present recommendations to the full member churches for temporarily setting aside any relevant portion(s) of this Constitution. Adoption of such recommendations will require a two-thirds vote of representatives present and voting at an officially called business meeting, when those present represent at least two-thirds of the full member churches of the Network, and also a vote of more than 50% of all full member churches (see VI.A.3.). If such an officially called business meeting cannot be held in a timely way, an electronic vote of two-thirds of the full member churches will be sufficient to temporarily set aside any portion of this Constitution. Furthermore, the assigned standing committee shall, within one year after first communicating this concern to the full member churches, submit to those churches for a vote (according to the provisions of par. 3 below) any proposed amendments considered necessary to permanently adjust the Constitution in order to address this concern.

3. Amendment.

Any article or appendix in this Constitution may be amended only after the proposed amendment has been distributed in writing to every member church at least sixty days before the vote is taken. Approval of the amendment will require both a minimum of a two-thirds vote of full member churches present and voting at an officially called business meeting where those churches present represent at least two thirds of the total full membership of the Network, and also a vote of more than 50% of all full member churches (see VI. A.3.). If such an officially called business meeting cannot be held in a timely way, an electronic vote of two-thirds of the full member churches as outlined in this document will be sufficient for amendment. 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, but primarily and geographically centered in North America for membership and fellowship. 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, financial support services, and urgent situations.
 - 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. Must have attended one GA prior to joining the Network.
- d. Agreement to abide by the constitution and policy manual of RBNNet.
- e. Be recommended by at least one current full-member church.

- f. Willingness to contribute financially to the general fund of RBNet as the Lord prospers their work.
 - g. Approval by a 2/3s vote at a duly called business meeting or through an electronic vote.
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. Must have attended one GA prior to joining the Network.
 - d. A church or individual must be recommended by at least one current full-member church.
 - e. Affirmation of RBNet associate membership statement of faith (Appendix B).
 - f. Agreement to abide by the constitution of RBNet (excepting subscription to the 1689 LBCF).
 - g. Commitment to not proselytize or become contentious about their differences with the 1689 LBCF.
 - h. Approval by a 2/3s vote at a duly called business meeting or through an electronic vote.

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 the 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 RBNNet completely by two-thirds 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 RBNNet

A. Privileges and Duties of Full-Member Churches

1. Churches should cooperate in Kingdom endeavors in accordance with the purpose statement and core values of RBNNet.
2. Churches will communicate with and pray for all full and associate-member churches and individuals and will likewise receive their fellowship and prayers.
3. Churches will give and receive the conscientious commendation of other member churches
4. Each church shall be allowed to have one church officer as a voting messenger at the GA.
5. Current or past Officers in good standing of member churches may serve as voting members of RBNNet committees.
6. Churches should financially contribute to the general fund of RBNNet as the Lord prospers their work.
7. Churches are expected to attend the GA at least once every three years.
8. 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.

9. If a member church has a substantial change from their subscription to the Confession, they should inform the Membership Committee.

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 communicating kingdom endeavors.
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 at least once every three years.
5. If Associate-member churches or individuals change their doctrinal commitment to the RBNet Associate Membership Statement of Faith, they should inform the Membership Committee.

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

a. Procedure

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.

b. Agenda

The GA Chairman, working with the RBNet standing committees and the Coordinator, will publish the initial agenda. 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.

c. Quorum

More than fifty percent of the full member churches must have messengers present to constitute a normal quorum at a business meeting of RBNet. However, in the case of a vote to temporarily set aside any relevant portion(s) of this Constitution or to amend any article in this Constitution, at least two thirds of the full member churches must have messengers present to constitute a quorum (see II. B. 2. & 3.).

d. Approval

1) Unless a higher percentage is required elsewhere in the Constitution or Policy Manual, a minimum voting requirement for approval of any matter will be over fifty percent of full member churches present at a duly called business meeting where a quorum is present. Exceptions to this basic requirement include:

- A procedural vote to adjourn any business meeting when the minimum voting requirement will be more than fifty percent of the full member churches with messengers still present
- Votes at an officially called business meeting where a quorum is present for positions in the Network when more candidates are

nominated than are needed to fill the position. In such a case those with the most votes will be elected.”

2) In the following cases, a higher percentage of full member churches present at an officially called business meeting where the required quorum is present (see 1) above) will be necessary for approval as follows:

- The temporary setting aside of any relevant portion(s) of this Constitution or amendment of any article or appendix in this Constitution will require the approval of at least 2/3 of the full member churches present (see II. B. 2. & 3.).
- The addition of, or removal of, full member churches, of associate member churches and associate individuals will require approval by at least 2/3 of the full member churches present (see Constitution, IV. D. 3. and Policy Manual, 3.2 - A. 6), B. 6), D. 5) & 9))
- The addition of, or removal of, missionaries, support missionaries, national pastors, church planters, and military chaplains will require approval by at least 2/3 of the full member churches present (see Policy Manual, 3.7 - B.)

3) In the following special, foundational cases, approval by over fifty percent of full member churches will also always be required in addition to the above requirements:

- Dissolution of RBNet in accordance with VI. F.
- Amendments to the Constitution including Appendices

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 and missionaries by a 2/3 vote of the 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 unless a higher percentage is required as outlined below. If, at least to a significant degree, a measure fails to pass due to the non-participation of more than 25% of full-member churches, the measure may be taken up again for final discussion and vote at the next official, physically in-person business meeting.
 - a. Approval of 2/3 of all full-member churches is required to temporarily set aside any relevant portion(s) of this Constitution or to amend any article or appendix in this Constitution (see II. B. 2. & 3.).
 - b. Approval of 2/3 of all full-member churches is required to add or remove full member churches, associate member churches and associate individuals (see Constitution, IV. D. 3. and Policy Manual, 3.2 - A. 6), B. 6), D.5 & 9)).
 - c. Approval of 2/3 of all full-member churches is required to add or remove missionaries, support missionaries, national pastors, church planters, and military chaplains (see Policy Manual, 3.7 - B.)”
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. Online Business Meetings

1. When there is more Network business needing to be addressed than can reasonably be addressed at an official, physically in-person business meeting, an online business meeting may be scheduled.
2. Except for its not being a physically in-person meeting, online business meetings must meet all the requirements listed under VI. A. including quorum

and approval requirements. Only full member churches participating in the online meeting may vote.

3. Voting:
 - a. Regarding a procedural matter requiring a more immediate decision, such as adjournment, or tabling or amending a motion, a form of voting will be adopted which provides the needed decision in a timely manner.
 - b. Regarding final votes on substantive matters, voting will be conducted in a documented manner similar to use of a paper ballot or electronic voting. Normally, all such voting should take place electronically on the day of the meeting. However, if there are challenges in transmitting votes, votes may be submitted by participating full-member churches either by regular mail or electronically up to two weeks following the online business meeting.

Substantive matters will include at least the following items (and may also include others):

- 1) Temporarily setting aside any relevant portion(s) of the Constitution, amending the Constitution including its appendices, and amending the Policy Manual.
- 2) Adding or removing full member churches, associate member churches and associate individuals
- 3) Adding or removing missionaries, support missionaries, national pastors, church planters, and military chaplains
- 4) Filling of, or removing from, positions where a vote is required
- 5) Dissolution of the Network

D. 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 and permanently retained in the RBNet Office.

E. 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. The corporate officers of RBNet will consist of the chairmen of the four standing committees and a Treasurer. These officers will have no duties or authority beyond the stated purposes of their appointment.

F. 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 (RBNNet) 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 RBNNet be guaranteed by minimizing or multiplying confessions. Unity within RBNNet 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 RBNNet 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, RBNNet encourages transparency in a humble and charitable spirit. Recognizing that terms may be defined differently, what RBNNet 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 RBNNet 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 "porneia", a Greek word commonly translated using the words "sexual immorality" (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and polygamy) is sinful and offensive to God. We also believe that any other form of sexual impurity (including filthy talk, viewing pornography, and other lustful looks) is sinful and offensive to God. We are required by our biblically framed convictions to declare and uphold this standard as occasion arises. (Matt 5:28-29; 15:18-20; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3-4; Colossians 3:5-8; 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).

Appendix D: Core Values

The Reformed Baptist Network Statement of Core Values

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

Adopted November 7, 2017
by the Churches of Reformed Baptist Network
meeting in General Assembly in Grand Rapids,
Michigan

Composed by the *Ad Hoc* Committee elected for
this purpose

Matt Foreman (*chairman*)
Jim Adams
Nicolas Alford
Jon Hueni
Jeffery Smith
Gordon Taylor (*member ex officio*)

Preamble

At the 2016 inaugural General Assembly of the Reformed Baptist Network, the gathered church representatives voted to commission a statement of core values. The intent was to mutually affirm and describe our goals and reasons for cooperation together. Organizational unity and healthy fellowship require a balanced and prioritized focus. It is in fulfillment of this commission and in the service of these principles that this statement of core values is prayerfully offered as a guide in our partnership with one another, a statement of our identity to the wider kingdom, and a witness to the watching world.

The Reformed Baptist Network is a network of churches, believing in the independence and sufficiency of the local church, and seeking to cooperate together according to the following core values: *our theological center, a gracious manner, and an earnest mission.*

Our Theological Center

The churches of the Reformed Baptist Network endeavor to hold our theological convictions with a *robustly confessional, intentionally humble, and consciously Christ-centered focus.*

Robustly Confessional – We embrace the historic stream of Christian orthodoxy, particularly as we have received it from our Reformed and Baptist forebears in the 1689 London Baptist Confession (1689 LBC). Our common confession is not peripheral to our cooperative efforts as a network – it is central. Theology drives methodology; thus a network that supposes to cooperate on common methodology not undergirded by common theology establishes a deceptively fragile bond.

Intentional Humility – A haughty Calvinist is a contradiction in terms. We therefore embrace the call of *semper reformanda*, acknowledging the need to ever more conform our lives and ministries to the doctrines of grace we confess. We acknowledge the reality and necessity of the Holy Spirit's continuing work of illumination, and that with its corollary *sola Scriptura, semper reformanda* calls us to submit all things to God's Word, ensuring our subordinate confessional standard remains truly subordinate. This is our confession's own self-limitation in the 1689 LBC 1:10,¹ and thus the only sort of confessionalism which is actually confessional.

¹

“The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved.”

Consciously Christ-Centered Focus – While acknowledging that all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable,² we affirm from the same Scriptures that Christ is the Alpha and Omega,³ the revealing Word and the Word revealed,⁴ the center of faith and life.⁵ While our confession of faith is robust, our confession itself points us toward an inner core, “those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation” (1689 LBC 1:7): the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus Christ himself stands as the Center of our center, Truth of our truth, and Unity of our unity. We full-heartedly affirm His supremacy in all things, and endeavor to view all else in the shadow of his marvelous light.⁶

A Gracious Manner

The churches of the Reformed Baptist Network seek to carry out our activities in a manner of gracious cooperation marked by *Christ-like love, gospel unity, and biblical reconciliation*.

Christ-like Love – “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).⁷ The identifying mark of Christ's disciples is Christ-like love for one another. This is not love reserved for those who are just like us, or who agree with us in every point – even the world has that kind of love. Rather, this is a love that distinguishes itself by loving all in the family of God, even (or especially) those with whom we differ. Therefore, we desire to express our love to all who are advancing the true gospel, and to do it tangibly through prayer and reports in our churches. Even within our network, with our common confessional commitment, we acknowledge that we have differences with one another – but we must not allow these differences to diminish our mutual love and respect. Rather, our diversity creates a perfect opportunity to demonstrate a love and cooperation that is not natural, but Spirit-given. Iron must be allowed to sharpen iron as we pursue the unity of the faith.⁸

Gospel Unity – Having a gospel-centered focus means we aim to be men of gospel graciousness. After setting forth the glorious doctrines of God's grace in the first three chapters of Ephesians, the Apostle pivots to the application of those truths in the Christian life. First among those applications is making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). At the end of the same chapter we

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³ 2 Tim. 3:16.

⁴ Rev. 1:8.

⁵ John 1:1-18, Heb. 1:1-4.

⁶ Luke 24:27, 1 Cor. 2:2, 15:3-4.

⁷ Isa. 9:2, John 1:4-5, 1 Peter 2:9, Rev. 21:23.

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Prov. 27:17, Eph. 4:13.

learn that nothing so grieves the Spirit as the breaking of his unity by a lack of love for one another (Eph. 4:30). Thus, maintaining a loving unity that glorifies the God of sovereign grace is no side issue of this network. It is a key truth and vital focus.

Biblical Reconciliation – When problems arise between us, we must reject a spirit of suspicion and judgment of motives, and instead quickly pursue reconciliation and peace according to the Biblical principles of conflict resolution. In a spirit of love and transparency, we must seek to understand one another, and to think the best of each other. By keeping our focus on the gospel we aim to learn from Christ his meekness and gentleness, and to be men of grace easily entreated whose sweet reasonableness is evident to all.⁹ Only in this spirit and fellowship of gospel grace will we be able to effectively cooperate in fulfilling the Great Commission and have an authentic and winsome witness to the world that the Father has loved and sent his Son.¹⁰ By these means we cooperate in all gospel labor with a spirit and manner that commends the love-creating power of that very same gospel: the good news that compels us to love others, as God has first loved us.

An Earnest Mission

Finally, our network of churches recognizes an earnest mission from the Father and a mutual commitment to encourage, promote and strive together in the great work of taking the gospel to all nations and peoples, baptizing those who believe, and establishing churches in which they are gathered and taught to observe all things that Christ has commanded.¹¹ This mission is fueled by God's *sincere offer* of Christ in the gospel and his *common love* for all mankind.

Sincere Offer – We hold unashamedly to the doctrines of grace, including God's sovereign and unconditional election of those who will be saved and Christ's definite, particular, and effectual atonement. In addition, we stand with the mainstream of historic evangelical Calvinism in affirming that, according to Scripture, Jesus Christ and his salvation are to be preached indiscriminately, and freely and sincerely extended to all in the gospel, since God commands and invites them to come to Christ and promises to save any and all who do. We do not follow the Hyper-Calvinist who, on the basis of the doctrines of sovereign and particular grace, rejects human responsibility and the sincere and free offer of Christ to all in the gospel; nor do we follow the Arminian who, on the basis of human responsibility and the free offer of Christ to all, rejects the doctrines of sovereign and particular grace. Rather, we embrace the tension the Bible itself sets before us, recognizing there are mysteries in God's person, purpose, methods,

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¹⁰ Phil. 4:5.

¹¹ John 17:21-23.

Matt. 28:18-20.

and ways that are beyond our present, finite ability fully to comprehend. Faith must swim where reason can only wade.¹²

Common Love – We believe the gospel command and invitation sincerely given is an expression of God’s common love for all mankind. While we must warn sinners of God’s wrath against them in their sin to awaken them, we must also tell them of God’s love reaching out to them in Christ to woo them. We agree with John Calvin himself, who said, “Even though there is nothing in the world worthy of God’s favor, he shows himself gracious toward the whole world, and he invites all men without exception to faith in Christ.”¹³ Likewise, we agree with the great Puritan theologian John Owen, who exhorts us “to dwell on the infinite condescension, grace and love of Christ, in his invitation of sinners to come unto him that they may be saved.”¹⁴

God’s love for sinners is expressed in Ezekiel 33:11 where God swears by his own self-existence that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked would turn from sin and live. It is seen in our Lord Jesus Christ as illustrated in his weeping over Jerusalem, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!” (Luke 13:34). God’s love is also declared in Deuteronomy 5:29, “Oh that they had such a heart as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever!” This love is illustrated in the cry of Jesus to the multitudes gathered in Jerusalem, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink” (John 7:37). And this love is supremely displayed in the sufferings and death of Christ on the Cross for sinners of mankind so that “whoever believes on him shall not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Therefore, we are not ashamed to invite all to come to Jesus Christ with the assurance that he will never cast them out (John 6:37). “Let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price” (Rev. 22:17).

May the Lord preserve and promote these core values among the churches of the Reformed Baptist Network, and may he be glorified in all.

12. Paraphrased from Thomas Watson.

13. J. Haroutunian & L.P. Smith, *Calvin: Commentaries* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), 194.

14. John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, Vol.1 (1850-53 reprint, Carlisle PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), 422.