

1 **CONSTITUTION**

2 *of the*

3 **CAPITOL HILL BAPTIST CHURCH**

4 WASHINGTON, D.C.

5 *Adopted by the membership on May 17, 1998*

6 *Revised by the membership on May 18, 2003, September 17, 2006,*

7 *November 16, 2008 and March 15, 2009*

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9
10 **Preamble**

11
12 Since it pleased Almighty God, by His Holy Spirit, to call certain of His servants
13 to unite here in 1878 under the name Metropolitan Baptist Church of Washington, D.C.,
14 for the worship of God and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and He has sustained
15 and prospered this work to the present day; and

16 Whereas we, the members of Capitol Hill Baptist Church, having searched the
17 Scriptures under the guidance of His Spirit, have recognized the need to reconstitute
18 ourselves to more closely conform to His will for the Church in this age and prepare
19 ourselves for greater efforts in His name;

20 Now therefore we, the members of Capitol Hill Baptist Church, do hereby
21 organize ourselves in accord with the D.C. Nonprofit Corporation Act and adopt this
22 Constitution as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the
23 character of and bring glory to Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Bible and articulated
24 in the standards set forth in the Statement of Faith (1878) and Covenant (1996) of this
25 church.

26
27 **Article 1 – Name**

28
29 The name of this church is Capitol Hill Baptist Church.

30
31 **Article 2 – Purpose**

32
33 This church exists by the grace of God, for the glory of God, which shall be the
34 ultimate purpose in all its activities.

35 This church glorifies God by loving Him and obeying His commands through:

36 Worshipping Him;

37 Equipping the saints through Bible instruction and study;

38 Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching and personal

39 evangelism, and any other means consistent with the teachings of Holy

40 Scripture;

41 Encouraging, supporting, and participating in missions work, local, domestic, and

42 international;

43 Administering the ordinances of baptism and communion;

1 Encouraging Biblical fellowship among believers;
2 Serving other individuals, families, and churches by providing for physical,
3 emotional, and spiritual needs, in the name of Jesus Christ; and
4 Calling fellow churches to biblical faithfulness and purity through instruction and
5 encouragement about the nature of the local church.
6

7 **Article 3 – Membership**

8

9 Section 1 – Qualifications

10 To qualify for membership in this church, a person must be a believer in Jesus
11 Christ who gives evidence of regeneration, who has been baptized, in obedience to Christ,
12 following his or her regeneration, and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith
13 as revealed in the Bible. Each member must agree to submit to the teaching of scripture
14 as expressed in the Statement of Faith and must promise to keep the commitments
15 expressed in the Church Covenant. The elders shall be responsible for determining each
16 person’s qualification for membership. In making this determination, they may rely on a
17 person’s profession of faith, or such other evidence, as the elders deem appropriate.
18

19 Section 2 – Admission of Members

20 To be admitted into church membership, applicants shall be recommended by the
21 elders for admission and accepted by vote of the members at any regular or special
22 meeting of the members, and shall at that point relinquish their membership in other
23 churches.
24

25 Section 3 – Duties and Privileges of Membership

26 In accord with the duties enumerated in the Church Covenant, each member shall
27 be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the
28 church, consistent with God’s leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources
29 each has received from God. Only those shall be entitled to serve in the ministries of the
30 church who are members of this congregation; non-members may serve on an ad-hoc
31 basis with the approval of the elders. Notwithstanding, non-members may serve the
32 church for purposes of administration and professional consultation.

33 Under Christ this congregation is governed by its members. Therefore, it is the
34 privilege and responsibility of members to attend all members’ meetings and vote on the
35 election of officers, on decisions regarding membership status, and on such other matters
36 as may be submitted to a vote.
37

38 Section 4 – Associate Membership

39 Students and others temporarily residing in the Washington, D.C. area who are
40 members of an evangelical church may apply for associate membership. Qualifications
41 are identical to those for full membership as set out above, except that home church
42 membership must be retained. A letter of commendation will be sought from the
43 applicant’s home church.

44 Duties and privileges of associate members are the same as for other members
45 except that:

- 1 (a) when absent from the Washington, D.C. area for extended periods of time
2 they are released from the responsibility to attend our church services;
3 (b) while they will be encouraged to participate in members' meetings they will
4 not be eligible to stand for any office or to vote.

5 Termination of associate membership as a disciplinary measure will be as it is for
6 other members, except that the elders shall notify the pastor or elders of the home church
7 of that termination. Associate membership will normally terminate immediately upon the
8 ending of the period of temporary residence in the Washington, D.C. area.
9

10 Section 5 – On Church Discipline

11 Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by
12 which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonoured, and so opposing the
13 welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline
14 of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18: 15–17 and the
15 example of scripture. Church discipline, then, should ordinarily be contemplated after
16 individual private admonition has failed.

17 Church discipline can include admonition by the elders or congregation,
18 suspension from communion for a definite period, deposition from office, and
19 excommunication (see Matthew 18: 15–17; 2 Thessalonians 3: 14–15; 1 Timothy 5: 19–
20 20; 1 Corinthians 5: 4–5).

21 The purpose of such discipline should be for the repentance, reconciliation, and
22 spiritual growth of the individual disciplined (see Proverbs 15: 5; 29: 15; I
23 Corinthians 4: 14; Ephesians 6: 4; I Timothy 3: 4–5; Hebrews 12: 1–11;
24 Psalm 119: 115; 141: 5; Proverbs 17: 10; 25: 12; 27: 5; Ecclesiastes 7: 5;
25 Matthew 7: 26–27; 18: 15–17; Luke 17: 3; Acts 2: 40; I Corinthians 5: 5;
26 Galatians 6: 1–5; II Thessalonians 3: 6, 14–15; I Timothy 1: 20; Titus 1:
27 13–14; James 1: 22);

28 For the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to
29 them (see Proverbs 13: 20; Romans 15: 14; I Corinthians 5: 11; 15: 33;
30 Colossians 3: 16; I Thessalonians 5: 14 [note this is written to the whole
31 church, not just to leaders]; I Timothy 5: 20; Titus 1: 11; Hebrews 10: 24–
32 25);

33 For the purity of the church as a whole (see I Corinthians 5: 6–7; II Corinthians
34 13: 10; Ephesians 5: 27; II John 10; Jude 24; Revelation 21: 2);

35 For the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians (see Proverbs 28: 7;
36 Matthew 5: 13–16; John 13: 35; Acts 5: 1–14; Ephesians 5: 11; I Timothy
37 3: 7; II Peter 2: 2; I John 3: 10); and

38 Supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character (see Deuteronomy
39 5: 11; I Kings 11: 2; II Chronicles 19: 2; Ezra 6: 21; Nehemiah 9: 2; Isaiah
40 52: 11; Ezekiel 36: 20; Matthew 5: 16; John 15: 8; 18: 17, 25; Romans 2:
41 24; 15: 5–6; II Corinthians 6: 14–7: 1; Ephesians 1: 4; 5: 27; I Peter 2: 12).
42

43 Section 6 – Termination of Membership

44 The church shall recognize the termination of a person's membership following
45 his or her death, and may do so after he or she has voluntarily resigned or joined with

1 another church. Membership may also be terminated as an act of church discipline
2 (ordinarily, but not necessarily, at the recommendation of the elders) upon the vote of at
3 least two-thirds of the members present at any regular or special meeting of the members.

4 The church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or
5 transfer of membership to another church, either for the purpose of proceeding with a
6 process of church discipline, or for any other biblical reason.

7 8 **Article 4 - Meetings**

9 10 Section 1 – Worship Meetings

11 Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day, and may be held throughout the
12 week as the church determines.

13 14 Section 2 – Members' Meetings

15 In every meeting together, members shall act in that spirit of mutual trust,
16 openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord
17 Jesus Christ.

18 There shall be a regular members' meeting at least every other month, at some
19 time apart from a public worship service agreed upon by the membership.

20 An elder designated by the elders shall preside as moderator at all members'
21 meetings of the church. The elders shall see that the stated meetings of the church are
22 regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible
23 members.

24 Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum
25 shall be understood to be met by those members present. All votes shall be tallied based
26 on the number of votes cast by members present.

27 A budget shall be approved by the membership at a members' meeting not more
28 than three months after the start of the fiscal year. Prior to this approval and subject to
29 the elders' discretion, expenditures may continue at the prior year's level.

30 At any regular or special members' meeting, officers may be elected and positions
31 filled as needed, so long as all relevant constitutional requirements have been met.

32 Special members' meetings may be called as required by the elders, or at the
33 written request, submitted to the elders, of five percent of the voting membership. The
34 date, time, and purpose of any special meeting shall be announced at all public services of
35 the church within two weeks preceding the meeting. In the event of a written request
36 from the members, the elders shall call a special meeting to be held within one month of
37 their receipt of the request.

38 39 **Article 5 – Officers**

40 41 Section 1 – Summary

42 The Biblical offices in the church are elders and deacons. In addition, our church
43 recognizes the administrative positions under this constitution of clerk and treasurer. All
44 officers must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

1 Section 2 – Elders

2 The elders shall be comprised of not less than three men who satisfy the
3 qualifications for the office of elder set forth in I Timothy 3: 1–7 and Titus 1: 6–9. A
4 majority of the active eldership shall be composed of church members not in the regular
5 pay of the church, and no elder shall hold the office of deacon during his tenure.

6 Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall oversee the ministry and
7 resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6: 1–6 and I Peter
8 5: 1–4, the elders shall devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching
9 and encouraging sound doctrine), and shepherding God’s flock.

10 The church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling, in
11 accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections. These men shall be received
12 as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as elders. This recognition shall be
13 reaffirmed by the church triennially. After an elder, other than the senior or associate
14 pastor(s), has served two consecutive three-year terms, he may only be elected to the
15 office of elder after at least one year.

16 An elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any
17 two members with reason to believe that an elder should be dismissed should express
18 such concern to the elders and, if need be, to the congregation. Any such action shall be
19 done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18: 15–17 and I Timothy
20 5: 17–21. Any of the elders may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote of the members at any
21 members’ meeting of the church.

22 The elders shall take particular responsibility to examine and instruct prospective
23 members, examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions,
24 oversee the work of the deacons and appointed church agents and committees, conduct
25 worship services, administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, equip the
26 membership for the work of the ministry, encourage sound doctrine and practice,
27 admonish and correct error, oversee the process of church discipline, coordinate and
28 promote the ministries of the church, and mobilize the church for world missions. The
29 elders are further to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including
30 outside speakers, share our fundamental convictions.

31 The elders may establish ministry positions or committees to assist them in
32 fulfilling their responsibilities. The elders may also propose funding for new paid staff
33 positions. The membership shall approve all candidates to fill the positions of senior and
34 associate pastor. The scope and approval of job descriptions for any staff position shall
35 reside in the hands of those with hiring authority for that position.

36 The elders shall have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and
37 evaluation of staff members. This responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be
38 delegated to another staff member.

39 Each year the elders, after consultation with the deacons, the deaconesses, and the
40 membership, shall present to the church an itemized budget. This budget shall be
41 presented for discussion at a specially-called budget meeting and called up for a vote at
42 the following members’ meeting. No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the
43 church or any of its ministries without the approval of the elders.

44 The elders shall elect a chairman of elders’ meetings and shall also elect one of
45 their number to serve as moderator of members’ meetings. For purposes of compliance

1 with the nonprofit corporation laws of the District of Columbia, the elders shall elect one
2 of their number to serve as the president of the corporation.

3
4 Section 3 – The Senior Pastor

5 The senior pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder
6 described in Section 2, above, and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted
7 and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.

8 His call shall not be subject to the triennial reaffirmation or to the term limitation
9 set out in Article 5, Section 2, for elders. His call shall be defined as per Article 6,
10 Section 3.

11 He shall preach on the Lord's Day, administer the ordinances of baptism and
12 communion, and perform such other duties as usually pertain to that office, or as set forth
13 in the constitution.

14 In the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor the elders shall assume
15 responsibility for his duties, any of which can be delegated.

16
17 Section 4 – Associate Pastors

18 The church may call additional pastors whose relationship to the senior pastor is
19 that of associate.

20 An associate pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder
21 described in Section 2, above, and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted
22 and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.

23 His call shall not be subject to the triennial reaffirmation or to the term limitation
24 set out in Article 5, Section 2, for elders. His call shall be defined as per Article 6,
25 Section 4.

26 He shall assist the senior pastor in the performance of his regular duties and shall
27 perform any other duties as usually pertain to the office of pastor, or as set forth in the
28 constitution, or which may be specifically assigned to him by the congregation.

29 In the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor for defined periods of time (such
30 as sabbatical or illness), the associate pastor(s) shall assume the responsibility for his
31 duties under the oversight of the elders.

32
33 Section 5 – Assistant Pastors

34 The church may call additional pastors, from within the congregation only, whose
35 relationship to the senior pastor is that of assistant.

36 An assistant pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder
37 described in Section 2, above, and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted
38 and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.

39 His call shall be subject to the triennial reaffirmation and term limitation set out in
40 Article 5, section 2, for elders. His call shall be defined as per Article 6, Section 5

41 He shall assist the senior pastor and associate pastor(s) in the performance of their
42 regular duties, and shall perform any other duties as usually pertain to the office of pastor.
43 The elders shall define the responsibilities of the assistant pastor(s).

44
45 Section 6 – Senior Pastoral Assistants

1 The elders may hire additional staff to assist with pastoral ministry, designated as
2 senior pastoral assistants. These shall not be pastors, though they may be recognized as
3 elders should they be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation, in
4 accordance with Article 5, Section 2.

5 The elders shall define the responsibilities of the senior pastoral assistant(s). They
6 shall serve at the will of the elders for an initial term up to four years, though that term
7 may be extended with the approval of the elders.

8 9 Section 7 – Pastoral Assistants

10 The senior pastor may hire additional staff to assist with pastoral ministry,
11 designated as pastoral assistants. These shall not be pastors, though they may be
12 recognized as elders should they be nominated by the elders and elected by the
13 congregation, in accordance with Article 5, Section 2.

14 The senior pastor shall assign the responsibilities of the pastoral assistant(s).
15 They shall serve at the will of the senior pastor for a term of one year, though that term
16 may be extended with the approval of the elders.

17 18 Section 8 – Deacons & Deaconesses

19 The office of deacon is described in I Timothy 3: 8–13 and Acts 6: 1–7. The
20 church shall recognize, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections, men
21 and women who are giving of themselves in service to the church, and who possess
22 particular gifts of service. These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His
23 church and set apart as deacons and deaconesses. They shall be elected to one term
24 lasting for a maximum of three years and may only be elected to another term after one
25 year.

26 Deacons and deaconesses shall care for the temporal needs of members, attend to
27 the accommodations for public worship, and encourage and support those able to help
28 others and those with gifts of administration.

29 The deacons and deaconesses shall receive, hold, and disburse a fund for
30 benevolence, reporting on its use to the elders at their request, and reporting to the church
31 its total receipts and total disbursements only.

32 The deacons and deaconesses, with the agreement of the elders, may establish
33 unpaid administrative positions or committees of members to assist them in fulfilling
34 their responsibilities in the church.

35 36 Section 9 – Clerk

37 It shall be the duty of the clerk to record the minutes of all regular and special
38 members' meetings of the church, to preserve an accurate roll of the membership, and to
39 render reports as requested by the pastor, the elders, the deacons, or the church.

40 The clerk shall be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation to
41 serve a term of one year.

42 In the absence or incapacity of the clerk the elders shall appoint a member to
43 perform the duties of the church clerk.

44 For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the District of
45 Columbia, the clerk shall serve as the secretary of the corporation.

1 The church clerk shall ensure that dated copies of the most recent revision of this
2 constitution shall be available for all church members.

3
4 Section 10 – Treasurer

5 The treasurer, who shall not be an active elder, deacon, or paid church staff
6 member, shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in
7 such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as appropriate. The treasurer shall also
8 be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues and
9 expenses of the church at each members’ meeting. The responsibility may be delegated
10 with the approval of the elders. The treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate
11 accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and
12 that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church
13 are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. The treasurer
14 shall render to the elders annually, or whenever they may require it, an account of all
15 transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the church.

16 The treasurer shall be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation to
17 serve a term of one year.

18
19 **Article 6 – Elections**

20
21 Section 1 – Principles

22 The process for church elections shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the
23 following principles:

24 Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, should be an integral part of
25 the election process;

26 Nominations should proceed with the support of the elders;

27 All candidates for church office should be treated with the grace, kindness, and
28 honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members;

29 The election process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving
30 consideration that is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

31
32 Section 2 – Selection of Officers

33 The election of officers shall be held at a members’ meeting of the church.
34 Names of nominees to serve as elders, deacons, clerk, or treasurer shall be presented by
35 the elders at the previous members’ meeting (providing that previous meeting occurred at
36 least eight weeks prior), and the election shall proceed as directed by the moderator.

37 The elders should seek recommendations and involvement from the general
38 membership in the nomination process. Any member with reason to believe that a
39 nominated candidate is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the
40 elders. Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their
41 objection to the elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant church members’
42 meeting.

43 The moderator shall declare elected all men receiving a 75% majority of all votes
44 cast for the office of elder. For all other offices, the moderator shall declare elected all

1 persons receiving a simple majority of all votes cast; abstentions will not be considered as
2 votes cast.

3 The persons elected shall assume their respective offices upon election, unless
4 another date has been specifically designated.

5

6 Section 3 – Calling of the Senior Pastor

7 In the calling of any man to this position, the same basic process of calling an
8 elder must be followed. In addition, however, the church must be given adequate
9 opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential senior pastor and, before being
10 asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the elders that, having
11 interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the
12 Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. Notice of the nomination of a man to be
13 elected to membership and called as senior pastor (which shall include, if necessary,
14 election to membership of his wife if he is married) must be given at two Sunday morning
15 services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a members' meeting.

16

17 Section 4 – Calling of Associate Pastor

18 In the calling of any man to the position of associate pastor, the same basic
19 process of calling an elder must be followed. In addition, however, the church must be
20 given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential associate pastor
21 and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the elders
22 that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted
23 assent to the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. Notice of the nomination of a
24 man to be called as associate pastor (which shall include, if necessary, election to
25 membership of him and his wife if he is married) must be given at two Sunday morning
26 services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a members' meeting.

27

28 Section 5 – Calling of Assistant Pastor

29 The calling of any man to the position of assistant pastor requires that that man
30 have been recognized and called by the congregation to the office of elder, according to
31 the process described in Article 6, Section 2. Such a man may then be called by the
32 elders to serve as assistant pastor with defined duties for a fixed period of time specified
33 by the elders in the terms of his call.

34

35 **Article 7 – Indemnification**

36

37 Section 1 – Mandatory Indemnification

38 If a legal claim or criminal allegation is made against a person because he or she is
39 or was an officer, employee, or agent of the church, the church shall provide
40 indemnification against liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim if the
41 elders determine that the person acted (a) in good faith, (b) with the care an ordinarily
42 prudent person in a similar position would exercise under similar circumstances, and (c)
43 in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the church, and the
44 person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful.

45

