

CONSTITUTION & BY-LAWS
OF
Iglesia Reformada Cristo Redentor

PREAMBLE

We the members of *Iglesia Reformada Cristo Redentor*, Houston, Texas, Ordain and Establish the following articles, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves:

ARTICLE I: Name

The name of this church shall be **IGLESIA REFORMADA CRISTO REDENTOR (IRCR)**.

ARTICLE II: Purpose

The purpose of this church is to glorify the God of the Scriptures in promoting His Word, edifying and equipping the saints in their ministry, and evangelizing and teaching all nations about our Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. To this end we are committing to proclaim the whole counsel of God's Word-Law especially His glorious gospel of grace in Jesus Christ throughout the world and to proclaim and defend the "*faith once delivered unto the saints*" (Jude 3).

ARTICLE III: Articles of Faith and Doctrine

Section 1 Our Three Forms of Unity

We do hereby adopt as a reasonable expression of our Christian faith the key doctrinal statements of the Protestant Reformation, as such; the Belgic Confession (1561), the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), and the Canons of Dort (1618–19), which together are called our *Three Forms of Unity*.

These confessions of faith give a concise statement of biblical doctrine. In no way is it equal to the infallible authority of the Word of God. Nevertheless, it is assistance to us in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness. In these Confessions the members of our church will have a body of divinity in a small compass and by means of Scriptural proofs will be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in them (I Peter 3:15).

Section 2 Statement on Gender and Sexuality

- a) Any form of sexual immorality, including but not limited to, adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, transgenderism, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography, is a sin according to God's Word and violates the biblical description of manhood and womanhood as reflecting the image and nature of God (Gen 1:26-27; Matt 15:18-20; 1 Cor 6:9-10).

- b) IRCR actively seeks to lead any person engaged in sexually immorality to confession and repentance that he or she might find justification and sanctification in Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:9-11).
- c) In light of the biblical view of its sinfulness, a person who is continuing in sexual immorality is not a fit candidate for membership in or employment on the staff of IRCR.
- d) It is imperative that all persons employed by IRCR in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this statement (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Thess 5:22).
- e) If a member of IRCR violates this statement, he or she shall be subject to the discipline of the church as outlined in Article IV, sec 6.

ARTICLE IV: Church Membership

Section 1 Requirements for Member

Any person who professes repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, who has been Scripturally baptized, and who expresses substantial agreement with the doctrines, aims, and government of this church, shall be eligible for membership. If the applicant has been a member of another evangelical church, a letter of inquiry into his or her standing with that church will be sent before final acceptance is made.

- a) CONFESSIO OF FAITH— Any person who meets the above mentioned requirements shall request membership to one of the Elders. The Elders shall then arrange a time and place for meeting with the applicant who shall attend and be questioned as to his or her basic Christian experience, doctrinal beliefs, and seriousness of intention to wholeheartedly support the ministry of this church.
- b) BY LETTER— If the applicant is, or has been, a member of another church, special effort will be made to determine the person's standing in that church and his or her reasons for leaving. If a former church raises an objection that the Elders consider valid, the applicant may be denied membership at their discretion. If another church has disciplined one of its members, and that person subsequently comes to IRCR, the Elders will decide whether to honor the discipline of the other church after due consultation with the person concerned and after all appropriate information is sought from the disciplining church.

Section 2 Forms of Membership

- a) COMMUNICANT MEMBERS — All who are accepted into the membership of the church on the above mentioned conditions shall be considered members in good standing until such status is changed by one of the conditions set forth in Sections 6 and 7.
- b) NON-COMMUNICANT MEMBERS — Children of, or under the care of, communicant members who undertake to rear such children in the “*nurture and admonition of the Lord*”, and who strive to encourage them to professes Christ as Savior, Lord and King for themselves, are to be enrolled as “non-communicant members”. Non-communicant

members may not receive the Lord's Supper or vote until they become communicant members for themselves.

- c) ASSOCIATE— Members of other evangelical churches, residing temporarily among us, who are active in the life of the congregation, and for whom worship and serve in their home church is impractical by reasons of distance or other good reason, may be enrolled as "Associate Members" of the congregation. They need not cease to be communicant members of their home churches, and will have all the privileges of worship, fellowship, and service, except that they may not vote at congregational meetings, nor hold the service of elder or deacon in this congregation.
- d) INACTIVE— Members become Inactive in one of two ways. 1) Members who fail to attend church for 4 consecutive Lord's Days without the approval of the Elders are automatically moved to Inactive status or 2) Members who are in the process of transferring to another church home and have completed the exit interview (Section 4.B) are Inactive Members.

Inactive members remain under the ecclesiastical authority of the church but may not vote in congregational meetings. Inactive members may be reinstated into active membership by the unanimous consent of the Elders.

Section 3 Procedure in Receiving New Members

When the Elders are satisfied that an applicant has met the requirements for membership, they shall then present the applicant to the congregation at a regular Sunday Service.

Section 4 Membership Covenant

Believers who have been instructed in the faith and who have come to the years of understanding shall be encouraged to make a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Those who wish to profess their faith shall be interviewed to the satisfaction of the Consistory concerning doctrine and life, and their public profession of faith shall occur in a public worship service after adequate announcement to the congregation and with the use of the appropriate liturgical form. Thereby baptized members are accepted into full communion in the congregation and shall be encouraged to persevere in the fellowship of the church, not only in hearing God's Word, but also in partaking of the Lord's Supper.

Section 5 Membership Responsibilities and Privileges

- a) Members of this congregation are to be subject to God's Scripture as the inspired Word, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. They are to voluntarily submit themselves to the governance and leadership of the Consistory of the church. They are to gather regularly each Lord's day for worship, instruction, prayer, and mutual encouragement.
- b) Having covenanted together to minister to one another's spiritual and temporal needs, each member may expect to obtain assistance in spiritual growth, in the rearing of covenant children, and in finding and filling a place of ministry and service. All members

are entitled to a warm and effectual ministry of Word and Sacrament, and the continuing prayers of fellow members.

- c) It is required that as a whole body of members, we seek the truth, purity, peace, and unity of the church.

Section 6 Discipline of Members

Corrective discipline implies disorderly conduct or heretical doctrine that is opposed to the church's life and faith. Reasonable efforts shall be made to clear up difficulties and remove offenses before further action is taken. Corrective discipline has as its aim the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the church, and the spiritual growth of the offender.

Members of this church who shall err in doctrine or conduct shall be subject to dismissal according to Matt 18:15-18, Gal 6:1, 1 Cor 5:1-5; 1Tim 1:18-20; 5:19-20; 2 Tim 2:16-18; Jam 5:19-20.

Before such dismissal, however:

- a) It shall be the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of the erring members heresy or misconduct to warn and to correct such erring members in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.
- b) If said erring member does not heed this warning, then the warning member shall again go to the erring member accompanied by one or two witnesses to warn and correct such erring member, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.
- c) If said erring member still refuses to heed this additional warning, then, it shall be brought to the attention of the Elders.
- d) The Elders, upon careful and prayerful investigation, shall announce it to the church.
- e) If said erring member refuses to heed the warning of the Elders and the church, he or she shall be publicly dismissed from the church.
- f) There shall be no appeal to any court from that decision.
- g) It is understood that this process will continue to conclusion even if the erring member leaves the church or otherwise seeks to withdraw from membership to avoid the discipline process.
- h) If said member, after dismissal, heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance, and requests restoration of membership, he or she shall be publicly restored to membership.

Section 7 Removal from Membership

A person's membership in the visible church ordinarily terminates in one of four ways:

- a) BY PHYSICAL DEATH —When a member of the Church is removed from our midst by death, His/her name shall automatically be removed from the membership roll.
- b) BY TRANSFER —When a member in good standing wishes to transfer their membership to another church, the Elders will send a letter of standing to the new church home. No such letter may be given for a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of the

church; rather, the church requesting a letter shall be notified of the discipline. The Elders may refuse, on a case-by-case basis, to grant a letter of transfer to any church which is, in their judgment, disloyal to "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints".

Members seeking transfer are to follow the following steps:

1. Before members absent themselves from Lord's Day services, members seeking to leave the church are to request a meeting with the Elders in which they will state their desire and reasons for leaving.
2. The Elders will acknowledge the decision of the member to begin visiting other churches as long as the member is not under discipline and there are no known issues between them and others in the congregation (cf. Matt. 18:15-20).
3. Between the time that a member indicates their intention to begin to visit other churches and the time said member joins another church, the member is considered an 'inactive member' (See Section 2.D).
4. During the time that members are looking for a new church home, the Elders will attempt to remain in contact by telephone or email to see how things are going in their search for a new church home.

The failure for a member to follow these steps may result in dismissal from membership.

Furthermore, if after 6 months, the member has not transferred his or her membership to another church home, the Elders, on behalf of the congregation, may dismiss them from membership.

- c) **BY DISMISSAL** —Dismissal is the removal of a person from the membership roles of the church. A member who has been dismissed is disqualified from partaking in the Lord's Supper until such a time as they shall be received by the Elders. Members under censure may not be dismissed.

Below are examples of situations where a member may be dismissed from membership:

- 1) If members fail to follow the appropriate steps for transfer as outlined above (see B above).
- 2) If members join themselves to another church which the Elders judge to be disloyal to "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints".
- 3) If a member has not transferred their membership within six months of their exit interview (See B above).
- 4) If a member can no longer be located or keep in contact.

Dismissal is performed by the Elders on behalf of the congregation. Unanimous agreement among the Elders is necessary before a member may be dismissed from the membership.

- d) **BY EXCOMMUNICATION** —According to the teaching of Scripture, a congregation must remove from its fellowship and visible membership one who insists on teaching or holding heretical doctrine or who blatantly and persistently conducts oneself in a manner

inconsistent with one's Christian profession (Mt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1ff). Excommunication is a last resort, to be used only after the Elders are in agreement that all other means of reclaiming the offending party have been exhausted. Its ultimate purpose is to promote the glory of God, to maintain the purity of Christ's church, and to reclaim a wayward person.

In addition to the member being removed from membership in the church, all other members of the church agree to cut off all fellowship with former members who have been excommunicated (Rom. 16:17-18; Tit. 3:10-11) .

The Elders must be in agreement for a member to be brought before the church for excommunication.

Section 8 Restoration of Membership

If a member, after dismissal, heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance, and requests reinstatement, he or she shall be publicly restored to membership. Any such request shall be made to the Elders body.

Section 9 Sacraments of the Church

God has instituted through Jesus Christ for the Church two sacraments; the holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

- a) THE HOLY BAPTISM A SIGN —The sprinkling of the water signifies the washing away of our sins through the blood of our Savior. (Ezek. 36:25, I Cor. 10:2, Matt. 28:19, I Peter 3:21).
- b) THE LORD'S SUPPER IS A SIGN —The broken bread and the wine poured out signify the broken body and shed blood of Christ, by which we are spiritually nourished and fed. (I Cor. 11:26).

ARTICLE V: Attendants

Section 1 General Statement

Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His Church and under His authority He has ordained that individual churches should be blessed with the spiritual and moral leadership and ministry of some attendees. Therefore, it is the duty of the church to seek and to discover those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts for this function, and having formally recognized such by common suffrage (Article IX. Sec5), to set them apart by united prayer and to submit to their leadership and ministry. Christ has ordained that the administration of local churches is to be by the services of Pastors, Elders, Deacons and the Fellow-workers.

All Pastors, Elders, Deacons and Fellow-workers must substantially subscribe to *Our Three Forms of Unity* and the Constitution of this church (Article III. Sec1). Should a Pastor, Elder,

Deacon or Fellow-worker at any time move from this position, he is under spiritual and moral obligation to make this known to the Elders.

Section 2. Eldership, Deacons and the Fellow-workers

A—PASTORS

Among the Elders are those whom we call Pastors or ministers:

(1) These are people who are set apart for prayer and the study of the Word. In conjunction with the other Elder(s), the Pastors shall have general oversight of all the church and they must use their gifts and their call to equip all the members of this congregation to their personal ministry and call under God's Word.

(2) The Pastors or ministers, being by Scriptural terminology a teaching and ruling Elders, must evidence the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications for this service as set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and in Titus 1:5-9.

(3) The Pastors shall seek to discharge all the functions of their service as set forth in the Scriptures and in keeping with the exercise of their own distinctive gifts of ministry.

B—ELDERS

Among us are those whom we call Elders:

(1) Elders are people that are called to be responsible for the spiritual ministrations of the church, the implementation of church discipline, and watching over the souls of the members as those who must give account to God for this responsibility. They shall exercise the oversight of the church in all its ministries and functions.

(2) Anyone desiring the service of an Elder must evidence the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications as set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and in Titus 1:5-9.

(3) Elders must seek to discharge their duties as set forth in the Scriptures, particularly such passages as Acts 20:17, 28, I Peter 5:1-4, and Hebrews 13:17.

(4) While every Elder bears spiritual leadership (and must be "apt to teach"), some will be more engaged in formal and public teaching, while others will be more exclusively engaged in the details of ruling by their services to others (I Timothy 5:17). Pastors and Elders are subject to each other, none having superior authority.

C—DEACONS

Among us are those whom we call Deacons:

(1) Deacons are people that are called to be responsible for the business and basic affairs of the church, which are to be administered with spiritual grace and in cooperation with and subjection to the Eldership. They are to minister mercy toward those in physical need, especially within the church. They are to maintain the church premises.

(2) Deacons must evidence the qualifications of the service as set forth in I Timothy 3:8-13.

D—FELLOW-WORKERS

Among us are those whom we call Fellow-Workers:

(1) The Fellow-workers are those individuals, men or women, who contribute and collaborate with their gifts and talents in the congregation and they show their call to the local ministry as set forth in Romans 16, Philippians 4:2-3 and I Corinthians 16:15-16.

(2) These people should be recognized as coworkers in our congregation by their ministries and functions in the local church.

Section 3 The Consistory

A. We believe that it is expedient, that those who are chosen superintendents in the church, should wisely consult among themselves, by what means the whole body may be conveniently ruled, yet so as they do not swerve from that which our Lord Jesus Christ has instituted. By this way a sound government among us must be carried out by the good judgment and the good example of the leadership of the ministers, Elders, Deacons and the Fellow-workers under God's Word and the Holy Spirit.

B. The Consistory is the only assembly in the church whose decisions possess functional authority within the congregation, since the Consistory receives its authority directly from Christ through their service to the others, and thereby is directly accountable to Christ (Matthew 16:19, 1 Peter 5:15, Hebrews 13:7, Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 31).

Section 4 Appointment and Removal of Attendants

A. The appointment of Elders, Deacons or Fellow-Workers for service within the local church is the responsibility of the local church under the guidance of God's Word and the Holy Spirit. The Lord's appointment is recognized both by the inward conviction of the individual involved, and by approval of the church observing the possession of those gifts and graces required by Scripture for the service concerned. The existing Elders shall recognize those who are already functioning in the use of their gifts and bring such before the church for recognition. All candidates must be a member of the church for a period of at least one year before being placed in nomination.

B. The recognition of an attendant is a matter of such importance that it should never be dealt with without much prayerful waiting upon God and an honest perusal of the relevant passages of Scripture and a frank evaluation of those who are being considered as potential attendant. Each member of the congregation has a spiritual responsibility to be intelligently informed regarding the above mentioned matters. It should be the desire of the congregation to come to one mind regarding those attendants to whom they must submit in the Lord, but should such

unanimity not be fully realized, no less than a 2/3 majority of the members present and voting shall be required for the election of an attendant (Article IX, Sec5, 6).

C. Following the final recognition of an attendant, there shall be a portion of a regular worship service set aside, at which time the attendant(s) shall be formally set apart for his responsibilities by the prayer of the whole church and the laying on of the hands of any existing Eldership.

D. An attendant may only be removed from service should he neglect his duty, be guilty of sinful behavior, fall into error, or hold views contrary to our confession and the local constitution. The Elders are to lead in the matter with great caution, firmness and impartiality (I Timothy 5:19). The removal of an attendant due to negligence or sin is ultimately determined by the congregation in a 2/3 majority vote (Article IX, Sec5, 6).

E. An attendant unable to fulfill his commitments should relinquish his duties or take a leave of absence from his service. An attendant requesting a leave of absence must provide the reasons for and the timeframe of their leave. While on a leave of absence, the attendant relinquishes all authority and responsibilities of service. Leave of absences must be approved by the Elders.

G. If at any time an attendant shall make an application to be released from his service, he shall do so in writing to the Elders. Upon receiving notice of resignation, the Elders shall inform the church in a specially called business meeting.

ARTICLE VIII: Official Board

Section 1 Function

The economical governing of the church and the conducting of its business, the management and control of its property, real and personal, and the general supervision of its work shall, under the direction of God's Word and the Holy Spirit, be vested in the Official Board.

Section 2 Members

The Official Board shall consist of the Elder(s) and Deacon(s). The Pastor shall act as chairman. The Board shall choose one of its number to act as Recording Secretary.

Section 3 Meetings

The Board shall meet at least once a quarter to discuss and act upon the general business of the church.

ARTICLE IX: Congregational Meetings

Section 1 General Statement

All Members should regard their presence at a duly called congregational meeting with the same seriousness with which they would regard their attendance at a stated service of worship.

The Lord is present in power at the gathering together of the church, and therefore all meetings should be carried out in a spirit of worship and unity. Every church meeting shall begin and end with prayer.

Section 2 Notice of Meetings

Notice of all congregational meetings shall be given at regular worship services on the two successive Sundays immediately prior to the meetings. In an emergency, a meeting may be called on shorter notice by notifying each member of the time, place, and purpose of the congregational meeting. A member will be considered "notified" when reached by telephone (either in person or via voicemail) or notified by email. Congregational meetings in which there is no business to be transacted by vote may be called at the discretion of the Elders without previous notice.

Section 3 Number of Meetings

Congregational meetings shall be held when needed for the reception of reports and the transaction of such other business as may properly be brought before the congregation. A congregational meeting shall be held as soon as possible after the close of each calendar year and shall be called the Annual Congregational Meeting. The adoption of a budget shall take place at the Annual Congregational Meeting.

Section 4 Method of Calling Meetings

It shall be the right and responsibility of the Elders to call all congregational meetings. The Elders shall arrange the details of all congregational meetings and see that all possible preparation for their successful conduct is made. Nothing shall be brought before the church at church meetings except through the Eldership.

Section 5 Quorum for voting for service Attendants

The voting members present at any constitutionally called congregational meeting shall be considered a quorum for voting for the attendants. It should be our goal to seek purity, peace, and unity of the church when we select those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts for service bearing in the local church (Article V). However, in such situations where unanimity is not realized, no less than a 2/3 majority of those voting is required for a motion to carry.

Section 6 Voting Eligibility

Voting is to be done by all the active members of the congregation who must also be 20 years old or older to vote (Numbers 1:3, Act 1:14). Non-members who may be present at congregational meetings by special invitation have no speaking or voting privileges and must remain silent on all matters unless invited by the Elders and agreed to by the congregation to speak on certain matters.

ARTICLE X: Dissolution

In case of dissolution of the church organization, the property and all assets shall be sold. From the proceeds, first all current and long-term promises: obligations of the church shall be paid. Secondly, all remaining funds shall be directed by the Official Board (see Article VIII) to such one or more Christian organizations qualified under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. This church shall be considered dissolved if so decided by a 2/3 majority vote at a congregational meeting (see Article IX).

ARTICLE XI: Amendments

Amendments to this Constitution may be made by the elders and adopted by a 2/3 majority vote of the congregation at any regular congregational meeting or special meeting called for this purpose, provided in either case that such amendment shall be distributed in written form to the membership at least two weeks prior to such meeting. An opportunity shall be given for questions and discussion of the proposed amendments in a congregational meeting at least one week prior to the vote.