

**The Covenant and Constitution of
THE WEST CENTER BAPTIST CHURCH
of Madison, South Dakota**

Having been lead by the Holy Spirit to profess our faith in Jesus Christ, and having been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we do now solemnly and joyfully affirm our covenant with God and with each other.

We pledge to serve Christ in the fellowship of this congregation. We shall endeavor to love one another, to remember one another in prayer, to share in each other's joys, and to sustain each other in times of distress. We aspire to be a fellowship of the concerned, where the lost may find Jesus Christ, sinners may find pardon, seekers may find meaning for their lives, and where all who come may find welcome. We shall strive to be responsible church members, through faithful attendance, study, and giving.

We shall seek to be obedient to Christ in our daily living. Within our homes, in our labor, and while at leisure, we shall strive for attitudes and actions which will reflect God's spirit working through us. Believing that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, we shall endeavor to avoid experiences and habits which defile the body and hinder our witness. Bound together in a fellowship of faith with all who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we shall pray and labor for a spirit of unity among all Christians.

Believing that our call to be a church is a call to witness in the world, we dedicate ourselves anew as servants of the Lord of all life. Whenever men are in bondage to ignorance, poverty, or fear of prejudice, we shall strive for justice, freedom, dignity, and peace. Whenever men are separated by barriers of hostility and distrust, we shall be ministers of God's reconciling love. As we pledge our support to the work of our missionaries throughout the world, we commit ourselves to the mission to which God calls us all.

Acknowledging our human frailties and ever seeking forgiveness, we profess our need of the Holy Spirit, and commit our lives to Jesus Christ and through Him to the care, the judgment, the deliverance, and the mercy of Almighty God. Amen.

PREAMBLE

We AFFIRM our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation by faith alone, believing in the teachings of the Word of God, and in those great principles set forth therein; namely:

1. We believe that God exists in three equal persons as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. We believe that Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, and is the only way to God.
3. We believe the Bible was given by God by divine inspiration and that every word is without error in the original writings. It is the only authority and guide for all doctrine and conduct.
4. We believe God created man in His image. Man sinned through Satan's temptation resulting in a need of God's salvation.

5. We believe salvation is given through God's grace and forgiveness by the redemption of Christ through His death and bodily resurrection.
6. We believe in a bodily resurrection and everlasting life for the saved and everlasting damnation to those who are unsaved.
7. We believe in the right of private judgment lead by the Holy Spirit in the interpretation of the Scriptures and in all religious concerns responsible for the Sacred truth of God alone.
8. We believe the Church is the body of which Christ is the head and all who put personal faith in Him are members.
9. We believe that the two ordinances of the church, as acts of obedience by believers, are baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper for those walking in fellowship with Christ.
10. We believe that the church and state exist by the will of God. Each has distinctive concerns and responsibilities, free from control by the other.
11. We believe in the independence of the local church and the congregational form of government.
12. We believe each Christian is individually responsible for evangelism and that the church is collectively responsible for spreading the gospel to the world through sending and supporting missionaries.
13. We believe that God created male and female to form the family as the basic unit of society and we seek to preserve its integrity and stability.
14. We believe all born-again people are seen by God as the same and we as the earthly church should treat all believers in that same Christ-like manner.
15. We believe that all members are to support the local church financially, motivated by love in a faithful manner.

We therefore band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ and adopt for our government, plan of worship and service, in the following articles:

ARTICLE I: THE NAME

The name of this church shall be West Center Baptist Church of Madison, South Dakota.

ARTICLE II: POLICY AND AFFILIATION

The government of West Center Baptist Church shall be vested in the body of believers who compose it. The Church shall be democratic and autonomous. However, it shall maintain cooperation with and support of the North American Baptist Conference and Great Plains Association. It also recognizes that there are other churches and organizations, which are a part of the body of Christ and may cooperate with them in matters with which it is in agreement.

ARTICLE III: THE MISSION

We, the people of West Center Baptist Church, seek to honor God by assisting in Building Healthy Disciples both locally and abroad. We seek a love relationship with God (salvation), love for the Word (knowledge and obedience), love for prayer, love for caring and sharing with others, and love of sharing Christ (evangelism).

ARTICLE IV: MEMBERS

SECTION I: RECEPTION OF MEMBERS

Any person who confesses Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and is baptized by immersion, who subscribes to the Preamble and Constitution, and is willing to enter into Covenant with this church, may be eligible for membership (after completing the necessary admission procedures) by approval of the Deacon Care Ministry Team.

Any immersed believer who wishes to unite with this church may do so by letter of transfer, by experience, or by restoration after giving a satisfactory statement before the Deacon Care Ministry Team.

New members will be recognized by the church body in one of the following ways: a church service, a congregational meeting, or a special event.

SECTION II: TRANSFER/RESTORATION OF MEMBERS

The Deacon Care Ministry Team will act upon any request by a member for a letter of transfer or request of withdrawal.

The Deacon Care Ministry Team will act on matters of restoration as a result of inactivity, a disciplinary action, or doctrinal differences with the Preamble.

The congregation will be notified by the Deacon Care Ministry Team in the case of a dismissal of a member by the appropriate written notice or a congregational meeting.

SECTION III: PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. To adhere to the vision statement and Constitution of this church, and to attend regularly its meetings and activities.
- B. To live and talk as is becoming to Christians at all times, and to avoid all appearances of evil.
- C. To consider his/her responsibility before God is supporting the ministries of this church through prayer, involvement, and the stewardship of finances according to the teaching of the New Testament.
- D. To guard the spiritual and scriptural purity, peace, and advancement of the church, and to promote a positive witness to the saving grace of God.

ARTICLE V: THE PASTOR

The pastor shall be an ordained minister of the Baptist faith and practice or one who is eligible for ordination in the Baptist denomination. He shall subscribe to the Preamble and Constitution and be willing to enter into covenant with the church.

ARTICLE VI: THE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

SECTION I: DUTIES

The Leadership Council shall be the primary governing body of the church. They shall be accountable to the church body for providing leadership in spiritual life, doctrine, policies, and planning. The Council will form Ministry Teams to assist in carrying out the ministries and activities of the church. The general members of the Leadership Council will be the liaison for at least one ministry team. The Leadership Council shall approve the chair of each ministry team.

SECTION II: ELECTION

The Leadership Council shall be elected by the membership at the annual meeting. The Council shall have twelve members: three members on the Executive Committee and nine general members. The Pastoral Staff shall be ex officio members of the Leadership Council. Council members must be members of the church and elected for three-year terms with four members elected each year. Members may serve multiple terms, but may serve no more than two full consecutive terms. The Leadership Council members will be nominated by the Nominating Committee and voted on by the membership.

SECTION III: QUALIFICATIONS

The Leadership Council members should have the gift of leadership and other gifts that complement the ministry teams for which they will be responsible. The general members of the Leadership Council, according to their spiritual gifts, will be the liaison for at least one ministry team.

SECTION IV: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- A. The Executive Committee of the Leadership Council shall consist of: the Chair, who shall function as Moderator of the church for all business meetings, the Vice Chair, who shall take over when the Chair is absent or the position is vacated, and the Treasurer/Secretary, who shall be responsible for the church finances and official church documents. The Senior Pastor will be an ex officio member of the Executive Committee.
- B. The Executive Committee will have one member elected each year for a three-year term.
- C. The Executive Committee shall act as legal officers of the corporation in accordance with the laws of South Dakota. They shall have the authority to sign documents on behalf of the congregation as so directed.

SECTION V: REVIEW OF ACTION

Any actions taken by the Leadership Council or its duly appointed teams may be modified at any official business meeting of the membership. A two-thirds majority of all those voting will be required to overturn the Leadership Council's action.

ARTICLE VII: MINISTRY TEAMS

- A. The Ministry Teams are for the purpose of carrying out the mission of the church body and are accountable to the Leadership Council.
- B. The Ministry Teams are formed or disbanded by recommendation of the Leadership Council and a two-thirds vote of approval by the membership.
- C. The number of individuals on a ministry team may vary but must have a majority of church members on each Ministry Team. Persons who are not members may serve on a Ministry Team but must also agree to the Statement of Beliefs adopted by NABC August 10-15, 1982.
- D. The chair of the Ministry Team will be selected by the team with the approval of the Leadership Council.
- E. Each Ministry Team will have a member of the Leadership Council who will work with the team and be the liaison between the Council and the team.

ARTICLE VIII: NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee shall be a three-member committee. Nominating Committee members will be recommended by the Leadership Council and approved by the church membership. They shall be approved at the annual meeting and have a one year term. The Senior Pastor shall be an ex officio member of the Nominating Committee.

ARTICLE IX: PASTORAL STAFF SEARCH COMMITTEE

- A. When a Senior Pastor is needed, a Senior Pastor Search Committee shall be recommended by the Leadership Council and approved by the church members. The Senior Pastor Search Committee shall consist of seven members: three members from the Leadership Council, at least one of who is an executive member, and four other church members. One of the Leadership Council members will serve as the chair of this committee.
- B. When other pastoral staff is needed, a search committee will be determined by the Leadership Council. The committee shall consist of the Senior Pastor, one Leadership Council member and one other church member. The Senior Pastor will serve as the chair of this committee.

ARTICLE X: BUSINESS MEETING

A business meeting may be called by the Leadership Council or by a quorum of the membership. A minimum of two consecutive Sunday notices prior to the meeting shall be required. An emergency business meeting may be called by the Leadership Council without consideration of the notice requirements. The annual meeting shall be held in the month of November or December.

ARTICLE XI: QUORUM

A quorum shall consist of twenty percent of the active membership determined by the Leadership Council at their first meeting after the election. On matters of finances and changes in the Pastoral Staff there must be a two-thirds majority of all those voting. Only members who are at least eighteen years of age may vote on financial or property matters.

ARTICLE XII: CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

Constitutional changes may be made with a quorum present and a two-thirds majority of all those voting. Any proposed constitutional change must be read at a regularly scheduled worship service on two consecutive Sundays and posted for at least a two-week period prior to the announced business meeting.

ARTICLE XIII: CHURCH POLICY

Policies and procedures by which this church operates are to be formulated by the Leadership Council and/or Ministry Teams. These policies shall be recorded and made available to the church members.

ARTICLE XIV: BY-LAWS

By-laws adopted by the membership shall be attached and become part of this constitution. By-laws shall be adopted, amended, or changed by a two-thirds vote of the congregation at a regularly scheduled business meeting. Changes may be submitted by the Leadership Council or through petition of at least five members of the congregation.

ARTICLE XV: CHURCH YEAR

The fiscal year of the church shall be the calendar year.

ARTICLE XVI: DATE OF EFFECTIVENESS

This constitution shall take effect on August 1, 1998. All previously written constitutions are hereby null and void.

BY-LAWS

SECTION 1: DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATION

West Center Baptist Church shall affiliate with and support the North American Baptist Conference; headquarter PO Box 1910, Folsom, CA 95763-1910, as well as the Great Plains Association which is made up of churches from this area which belong to the North American Baptist Conference by involvement in their programs and activities.

SECTION 2: THE MISSION

For further clarification of the mission statement see the attached Statement of Beliefs adopted by the North American Baptist Conference on August 10-15, 1982.

SECTION 3: RECEPTIONS OF MEMBERS

After completion of a membership class, the Deacon Care Ministry Team will hear testimonies of prospective members before making a recommendation for membership to the Leadership Council. Members may be received by:

- A. **BAPTISM:** After confession of one's faith in Jesus Christ and evidence of salvation in one's life, he/she will be received after being baptized by immersion.
- B. **LETTER:** A person whose membership is in another church of like faith and practice may transfer membership by authorizing the Deacon Care Ministry Team to request a letter of transfer including information on his/her status in that church.
- C. **EXPERIENCE:** A person who is a Christian and has subsequently experienced believers' baptism in a church of like faith and practice, but not presently holding membership, may seek membership.

SECTION 4: TRANSFER/RESTORATION OF MEMBERS

Changes in membership will be handled in the following ways:

A. Letter

1. Transfer

A member in good standing shall, on written request to the Deacon Care Ministry Team, be granted a letter of transfer by vote of the Leadership Council to any church of like faith and practice. Such letter will be sent to the pastor or clerk of the church with which that person desires membership.

All members who move to another community or church are encouraged to ask for a letter of transfer or recommendation within one year.

2. Withdrawal

A member in good stand shall, on written request to the Deacon Care Ministry Team, be granted a letter of commendation by vote of the Leadership Council to any church of another faith and practice. Such letter will be sent to the pastor or clerk of the church with which that person desires membership.

All members who move to another community or church are encouraged to ask for a letter of withdrawal within one year.

B. RESTORATION

1. Inactivity

In order to uphold the quality of our commitment and faithfulness to Christ and His church, and realizing that our covenant with one another is essential to the proper function of the church's mission, anyone who has not participated in services of worship, except for illness, infirmity, temporary absence from this area, or temporary employment in another area, shall be considered as inactive and cannot be counted as a member in good standing. He/she shall not have voting rights, nor have voice, or hold an office.

The Deacon Care Ministry Team will determine the time period after which action will be taken with regard to inactivity and make such recommendation to the Leadership Council for action. Those who intentionally, by reason of their absence, do not respond to reasonable efforts by the Deacon Care Ministry Team to restore that members' covenant relationship, shall have their membership terminated.

2. Discipline

If there is a grievance between members, it is expected that those involved, act in a spirit of reconciliation and love according to the words of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17.

If any member is charged with unrepentant sin, such written charge shall be brought to the attention of the Deacon Care Ministry Team. No one may present such charge or complaint publicly before the church. The Deacon Care Ministry Team shall make a thorough investigation into such charge.

If necessary, the Deacon Care Ministry Team shall make recommendations to the Leadership Council for further action. No accusation shall be made against a member before the church by anyone until the member concerned has been informed that such matter is to be brought before the Leadership Council.

Such member shall have the right to make his/her own reply. The Deacon Care Ministry Team shall respond by making every effort to bring such member to reconciliation. The approach must be loving and redemptive.

The Leadership Council shall determine the appropriate method to notify the congregation of any disciplinary action.

SECTION 5: ORDAINED STAFF

A. SENIOR PASTOR

1. The Senior Pastor shall have charge of the services of public worship, shall direct the spiritual growth and care of the church, and oversee the pastoral staff. The pastor shall select and recommend to the Leadership Council individuals to fill staff positions. The pastor or his designated staff person shall be an ex officio member of all church teams.
2. The Senior Pastor is to be the representative of the church at denominational functions. He shall be compensated for expenses approved by the Leadership Council. He may also attend other nondenominational functions as approved by the Leadership Council. When his wife attends with him, her expenses shall be paid.

B. OTHER ORDAINED STAFF

C. PASTORAL/CONGREGATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

1. The Executive Committee of the Leadership Council shall act as the Pastoral/Congregational Relations Committee. The Pastor/Congregational Relations Committee shall see that the welfare of the pastor, his family, and the congregation is addressed.

The Pastoral/Congregational Relations Committee shall also be responsible for an annual evaluation of the pastor.

The professional relationship between the pastor or any other pastoral staff and the congregation may be terminated at his initiation by written notice to the Leadership Council.

The relationship shall be ended after a minimum of seven days or at a time agreed upon by the Leadership Council and pastor.

2. In the event of a strained relationship, the Pastoral/Congregational Relations Committee shall recommend a course of action to the Leadership Council.

If two-thirds of the Leadership Council deems dismissal necessary, the pastor shall be immediately placed on paid leave of absence.

A congregational meeting shall be called to deal with the Leadership Council's action.

SECTION 6: LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

A. DUTIES

In carrying out their role as the principal governing body of the church, the Leadership Council shall meet on a regular basis. They shall insure that the following shall take place.

1. Be responsible for the consistent application of this constitution.
2. Give guidance to and work with the areas of ministries. It may overrule a decision of a ministry area if it in the best interest of the spiritual well-being of the church body. The chairperson shall assign a Leadership Council member to a ministry for an annual term who shall attend ministry meetings and report their progress to the Board.
3. Make recommendations to the congregation on:
 - a. Adopting the annual budget.
 - b. Buying or selling real property.
 - c. Authorizing expenditures above or in addition to the annual budget.
 - d. Authorizing unbudgeted expenditures up to five percent of the previous year's annual general fund giving.
 - e. Any other business that they deem appropriate.
4. Approve candidates for membership and maintain an active membership roll.
5. Determine the quorum on an annual basis.
6. Determine salaries, benefits, and policies of all employed personnel.
7. Approve subcommittees as suggested by the ministry teams for special projects.
8. Supply the guest speaker in the absence of the pastor.
9. Set the times for corporate worship services.
10. Approve policies and procedures submitted by the Ministry Teams.
11. Serve on the Senior Pastor Search Committee and other pastoral staff search committees as needed.

B. QUALIFICATIONS

The Leadership Council members must:

1. Be a Christian for five years.
2. Be twenty-one years of age.
3. Be a member of the church.
4. Follow the standard for leaders set forth in I Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9.

C. VACANCY/TERMINATION

1. The Nominating Committee shall be asked to select name(s) to fill any unexpired term(s) on the Leadership Council. These name(s) shall be brought before the congregation for election at the earliest convenient business meeting.

2. Any Leadership Council member may resign by submitting a written resignation to the Leadership Council.
3. Any Leadership Council member who is found in questionable behavior shall be referred to By-Laws Section 4B, 2 Discipline.

D. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE DUTIES

1. The Executive Committee members shall:
 - a. Serve as the Pastoral/Congregational Relations Committee
 - b. Set the agenda for the Leadership Council meetings.
 - c. Set the agenda for the church business meetings.
2. The Chairperson shall preside at all official business meetings.
3. The Treasurer/Secretary shall:
 - a. Serve on the Stewardship Ministry team.
 - b. Shall be responsible for the church finances and official church documents.

SECTION 7: MINISTRY TEAMS

A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. The purpose of these ministries shall be to manage their respective areas by enlisting members of the congregation to work with them in carrying out their responsibilities. Should these ministry areas change substantially or dismiss, the Ministry Team may be disbanded as outlined in the constitution.
2. Minimum of three, one person appointed by Leadership Council, one person elected, the others are appointed by the team.
3. No person can serve on more than two teams or elected positions.
4. Each team shall submit an annual budget to the Stewardship Ministry Team and be responsible for overseeing the budget.
5. Each team must develop policies and operating procedures with the Leadership Council's approval. These shall be placed on file in the church office.
6. The Ministry Teams shall deal with their own team's policies and procedures including who shall determine who serves as members.
7. Additional duties may be temporarily assigned to any Ministry Team by the Leadership Council as needs arise.

B. TITLES AND DUTIES

1. Worship

The Worship Team shall work with the pastoral staff in developing meaningful and creative experiences of worship for all ages. Such areas of responsibility shall be music, choir, ushers, greeters, drama, sound system operation, TV and radio, and sanctuary décor.

2. Children Discipleship Team

The Children Ministry Team shall initiate, promote, and develop programs that will introduce children to Christ as well as building a strong Biblical foundation for their understanding of God. Such programs shall include Sunday School, worship time ministries, summer ministries, Bible camp, recreation, and Wednesday evenings. They shall recruit, train, and select curriculum for the spiritual and proper social development of our children.

3. Youth Discipleship Team

The Youth Ministry Team shall initiate, promote, and develop programs that shall introduce children to Christ as well as building a strong Biblical foundation for their understanding of God. Such programs shall include Sunday School, weekly meetings, small group activities, Bible study and prayer, Bible camp, and recreation. They shall recruit, train, and select curriculum for the spiritual and proper social development of our youth.

4. Adult Discipleship Team

The Discipleship Ministry Team shall initiate, promote, and maintain programs that shall assist adults in developing spiritual maturity through Bible study, discipleship, small group studies, and in the nurturing of others. They shall recruit, train, select curriculum, and oversee all aspects of the adult area.

5. Outreach

The Outreach Ministry team shall help lead, equip, and train the body to reach unsaved people. They shall find ways within the community where peoples' lives can be touched by the love of Christ.

6. Stewardship

The Stewardship Ministry Team shall be responsible for such activities as annual budget, record keeping, promoting effective stewardship within the congregation, receiving and depositing all tithes and love gifts, and paying church bills. Any investment of funds by the Stewardship Ministry Team other than local short term banking investments must be brought to the church congregation for approval. The Stewardship Ministry team shall report, on a monthly basis, an itemized statement of income and expenses to the Leadership Council; and on a quarterly basis, an executive summary to the church congregation. They shall provide an annual report to the church. They shall assemble the annual budget based on recommendations of the Ministry Teams. The Stewardship Ministry Team shall appoint a recording treasurer to keep and distribute individual and confidential giving records of each contributor. The Executive Council Treasurer shall be appointed to this team.

7. Facilities/Property Management

The Facilities/Property Management Ministry Team shall be responsible for the maintenance of buildings, grounds, and other real properties and maintain adequate insurance coverage. They shall also be responsible for upkeep and maintenance of

related equipment such as the Sunday School, kitchen, technical, and other equipment. They shall determine the general usage of facilities and security.

8. Mission

The Mission Ministry Team shall be responsible for management of the mission program through education and promotion. They shall encourage and support those within our membership who have been called by God and are seeking education and training in professional Christian work. They shall review applications of missionaries or groups seeking financial support for recommendation to the Leadership Council. They shall also annually review the progress of each missionary or group to determine continued support. The Mission Ministry Team shall recommend, to the Council, the annual mission budget and keep the congregation updated on the ministry of each person or group supported. They shall maintain loyalty to the North American Baptist Mission Program.

9. Deacon Care

The Deacon Care Ministry Team shall be responsible for such activities as all aspects of membership, communion, baptism, marriage procedures, developing a caring community of believers through shepherding, and other ministries to meet the individual needs of the congregation. The Deacon Care Ministry Team shall be made up of church members. An ordained staff member shall serve on this team.

10. Welcome

The Welcome Ministry Team shall assist people to go from visitors in the church to becoming healthy disciples.

SECTION 8: CONDUCTING BUSINESS MEETINGS

In conducting the official church business meetings, *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* shall be followed.

SECTION 9: TRANSITION PROCEDURES

This section comes into effect when the constitution is adopted. Upon election and establishment of the Leadership Council these rules become null and void:

1. Straws will be drawn to determine the individual Leadership Council members' length of term. The first and second year of service will not count towards a full three-year term.
2. Straws will be drawn to determine the Executive Council member's length of term. The first and second year of service will not count toward a full three-year term.