





Nevada Reformed Baptist Churches

Constitution

Purpose

Nevada Reformed Baptist Churches (NVRBC) exists to facilitate Reformed Baptist church planting, revitalization, and church support in rural areas, or other areas of need, in Nevada. As a secondary purpose, NVRBC exists to facilitate fellowship among Nevada Reformed Baptist churches.

Vision of NVRBC

NVRBC desires that Reformed Baptist churches work together to maintain and spread Gospel light throughout Nevada by means of local church planting and support. NVRBC desires that the fullness of the Gospel, as expressed in the Reformed confessions of the 16th and 17th centuries, be proclaimed in such a way that strong beacons of Gospel light are established in the darkness of Nevada.

Distinctives

- 2nd London Baptist Confession of Faith
 - Church plants need to substantially agree with and adopt the 2LBCF as their confession of faith.¹
- Church autonomy
 - We recognize that the highest degree of church authority is the individual elders of local churches. As such, there should be no binding authority over the elders of local churches apart from the authority of Scripture.
 - NVRBC church membership does not require churches to participate in every church planting effort nor can NVRBC make decisions that interfere with local church autonomy.
- Local church oversight
 - Ministers of the Gospel must be sent. No individual can appoint himself an elder.
 - Church planters will be accountable to one sending church and not to NVRBC.
 - Funding for church plants from other churches will be funneled through the sending church.

1

https://www.academia.edu/77286587/Subscription_Among_Reformed_Baptist_Churches_The_Proper_Use_of_the_Confession?source=swp_share

- Once a church plant becomes constituted, funds can be directly sent.
- Church cooperation
 - Churches will be available to provide advice on church-plant planning.
 - At their discretion, churches will use their resources to assist church-planting endeavors.
 - Churches will work to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
 - Our recognition of local church autonomy allows for a measure of charitable differences in opinions.
 - Our value of unity means we must be guarded against gossip and slander.
 - Our susceptibility to the root of bitterness growing in our hearts and to the schemes of Satan means we must work to pursue reconciliation with one another immediately when problems arise.

Membership Requirements

- Must be a church with a plurality of elders (with exceptions for churches that may have only one elder for a season)
 - A member church that finds itself with no elders will be reclassified to Associate Membership until it once again has at least one elder.
- All elders must subscribe to the 2LBCF with the allowance for minor exceptions (see below)
- Must subscribe to the Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy², Nashville Statement³, and the FIRE Statement on CRT⁴
- Elders must demonstrate God-honoring character
- Must be willing to utilize resources, at each church's discretion, to facilitate the church planting and support mission
- Must participate in a yearly assembly of church officers
 - At least two elders from each member church must attend
 - In special cases where there are limited elders, only one will need to attend
 - Churches give a summary report of the yearly assembly to their body
- Must be initially approved by at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of the member churches (each church determines through its own elders)
- All member churches have voting privileges

Associate Membership

- Churches that do not have unanimous elder subscription to the 2LBCF who nevertheless wish to support the work and enjoy the fellowship of NVRBC, may pursue "Associate Membership" if all the elders consent
- Associate member churches should not seek to teach against the 2LBCF during interchurch fellowship

² https://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI_1.pdf

³ <https://cbmw.org/nashville-statement/>

⁴ https://faithconnector.s3.amazonaws.com/3893/files/policies_and_protocols/crt_statement_2022_.pdf

- Associate member churches will not have voting privileges
- Associate member churches must still meet all of the other aforementioned membership requirements

Church Messengers

- In cases of voting, each member church must designate two elders to participate in voting (unless in special circumstances where only one elder may be available). Each church will have one vote. A quorum is designated to be a simple majority of churches present at a vote.
- Similarly, in cases where advice is needed for difficulties and differences, each member church will designate two elders (unless only one elder is available) to participate in discussions.

Church Planter Requirements

- Must exhibit the qualities of a biblically qualified elder
- Must substantially adhere to the 2LBCF
- Under normal circumstances, we would require that a church-planting candidate either possess or be working toward a seminary degree. There may be exceptions, which will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Church Planting Process

- Church plant requirements:
 - Pastor has the 2LBCF as his teaching standard
 - Church plant locations should be in places where there are no other Gospel-proclaiming Reformed churches nearby (unless the population of a church plant location is large enough, e.g., Reno-Sparks)
- When a church desires to send a church planter, said church will communicate with the rest of the member churches.
- Opportunity will be provided for elders of other member churches to meet with the church planter and his spouse to ask questions and get to know them.
- The sending church will be responsible for initial oversight and accountability of the church planter.
- Churches can choose to support financially by sending money designated for the church plant to the sending church.
 - The sending church will be responsible to provide fiscal accountability to supporting churches.
- Churches may inquire of their body to see if there are those who would like to join the church plant.
- Churches may also contribute to church planting through the skills and talents of church members.
- The goal for church plants is eventual independence. However, we recognize, due to the nature of rural churches, some churches may never reach full financial independence.

- Church plants are not part of the NVRBC by nature of being sent by a member church, but they may apply for NVRBC membership.

Church Support/Revitalization

- There may be opportunities to financially support preexisting church ministries in rural areas that cannot otherwise support themselves.
- In such cases, for financial support, the elders of said churches need to meet the aforementioned qualifications for church planters.
- Finances are to be directed to the pastor.
- Furthermore, if there are churches that have a need for a pastor, the NVRBC may support sending a pastor to a preexisting church with the hopeful intention that eventually, after a period of teaching through it, the 2LBCF will be adopted.

Meeting

- The churches of NVRBC will hold an assembly of the church officers every year.
 - Unless decided otherwise by the majority in the prior year, the assembly will take place during the fourth week of May, on Tuesday. The location of the meeting will be decided the previous year.
 - Among other things, this meeting may include:
 - Pastoral addresses
 - Church reports
 - Prayer for the needs of the churches
 - Formal meeting of member church officers
 - Voting to approve new member churches
 - Church planter highlight

Significant Leadership Changes

There are times in a church when significant leadership changes occur that may affect the doctrine taught in that church. In this case, if another member church has cause for concern, they may call for a meeting to evaluate whether or not that church should stay in NVRBC. If there is additional cause for concern, a vote may be called to remove said church.

Church Removal Process

We recognize that there may be times when a church must be removed from the NVRBC.

Reasons for removal include:

- Doctrinal change away from the 2LBCF and other adopted statements
- Major moral failures within church leadership that are not resolved biblically.

- Behavior that is not consistent with the mission and distinctives of NVRBC
- Two consecutive years of not sending elders to the general assembly without explanation
- Consistently does not contribute resources to church planting and support efforts in any capacity
- Dissolution of a church (automatic removal)

First, in the stated cases above, it is encouraged that member churches remove themselves when necessary. Member churches may remove themselves from NVRBC at any time and for any reason by submitting a letter to representatives from each of the member churches.

If churches hear something concerning another church, they must, in charity and assumption of the best, first reach out to the pastor of said church. When necessary, one church may call for an examination to initiate the church removal process. Other member churches will do their due diligence to investigate the claims against the church for a period of three months after the initial claim. After the three months, messengers from the member churches will meet together, either in person or online, to discuss their findings. This vote can be done in person, by email, or by online meeting. A $\frac{2}{3}$ vote is required to remove a church.

Removed churches, upon changes in their circumstances, may reapply for association membership.

The Association may choose to suspend a church's membership temporarily during a time of investigation or observation of how a member church will resolve some issue that could threaten membership in the Association. A $\frac{2}{3}$ vote is required for the suspension of a church.

Moderator

- Every year the association will vote by simple majority to appoint a moderator for the year.
 - This position is to help facilitate and is no way a position of authority over the association.
- The moderator's responsibilities include:
 - Arranging a place for agreed upon meeting location
 - Developing meeting agendas
 - Facilitating assembly meetings
 - Arranging additional meetings when special circumstances arise
 - Calling for votes when necessary

Additional Voting

- In addition to the aforementioned voting scenarios, there may be other situations in which a vote is necessary.
- In such cases, the moderator will call for a vote.
- A $\frac{2}{3}$ vote is required for something to pass, with the exception of changes to the constitution which requires a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote.

Confessional Subscription Requirement (adapted from RBNet⁵)

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. 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 churches of the NVRBC 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 NVRBC be guaranteed by minimizing or multiplying confessions. Unity within NVRBC 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.

Membership in NVRBC requires that elders of churches maintain 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 (LBCF 1.9) when there is a reservation about the true and full sense of the wording of the Confession, NVRBC encourages transparency in a humble and charitable spirit. Recognizing that terms may be defined differently, what NVRBC means by substantial subscription is confession of the doctrines expressed in each chapter of the LBCF, yet with liberty and charity over minor matters of wording, application and nuance not essential to those doctrines as a whole to the LBCF.

Any reservations or exceptions must be expressed in the NVRBC membership application and approved by the member churches.

⁵ <https://reformedbaptistnetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Confessional-Subscription-Outline.pdf>