



Bylaws

1. Status of Bylaws

The bylaws of Burning Bush Reformed Church (BBRC) are subject to BBRC's constitution. All documents, conduct and decisions of BBRC, including the constitution and the bylaws, are subject to the Word of God and the confessional standards of BBRC, i.e. the three ecumenical creeds (Apostolic Creed, Nicene Creed, and Athanasian Creed) and the three Forms of Unity (the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt).

2. Church Associations and Denominations

BBRC may associate or network with other churches in denominational church structures. Such association must in no way hinder the independence and autonomy of BBRC as a local church or impede in any way the freedom of any of the church's members to openly proclaim to everyone all of God's truth in the Bible.

3. Government of the Church

Jesus Christ is the only Lord and Head of the church. This means that the decisions and actions of every member and office bearer of the BBRC must always be subject to the Word of God, and that we look to Christ to guide the church through the decision-making processes of our members and elders/deacons. It also means that BBRC should remain vigilant that various organizations and powers, whether ecclesiastical bodies, or political bodies such as the state, do not impinge on the freedom and calling that we have as a church of Christ.

4. Members Meetings

Members of BBRC can meet for the purpose of conducting church business either as a men's meeting, as a meeting of elders / deacons, or as a general meeting.

Meetings are called by the elders and deacons, and due notice of the scheduled meeting must be given. A members meeting can also be called by a (previous) members meeting, or if 20% of the church members sign a document requesting a meeting.

5. Men's Meetings

BBRC's men's meeting is a meeting to conduct church business attended by male church members. Men's meetings will gather once a month or more frequently, except during summer months when they will meet as feasible and as needed. At a men's meeting, those entitled to vote are all male members who have made profession of faith and are members in good standing, i.e. not under discipline.

6. Elders / Deacons Meetings

Elders/deacons meetings (also called meetings of the “church council” or “consistory”) are meetings of the elders and deacons to conduct church business. Elders/deacons meetings will take place once a month or more frequently, except during summer months when they will meet as feasible and as needed. At an elders/deacons meeting, only elders and deacons are entitled to vote.

7. General Meetings

A BBRC general meeting is a meeting to which all male church members are specifically invited to conduct church business. A general meeting will be held at least once a year. At a general meeting, the members of the church entitled to vote are male members who have made profession of faith and are members in good standing, i.e. not under discipline. In obedience to the Word’s instructions, for example in 1 Tim. 2:11–13 and 1 Cor. 14:33–35, BBRC does not permit women to teach or rule in the church.

8. Notice of Meetings and Events

Due notice must be given of church events such as midweek church services, celebration of the Lord’s Supper, administration of baptism, professions of faith, members’ meetings, changed time of church services, etc. Two weeks’ notice will usually be sufficient, but in certain circumstances a longer or shorter period will be appropriate.

9. Elders and Deacons

In accordance with the teaching of the New Testament, Article 30 of the Belgic Confession, and the Church Order of Dordt, BBRC recognizes that elders and deacons must be elected following the example of the New Testament church. Elders and deacons have the requirements and duties listed in the Word, the confessional standards, and the Church Order. Elders who assume the function of preaching are preaching elders or ministers or pastors (although in the New Testament the term pastor applies to all elders). For purposes of church administration, at least the following officers are appointed from the elders and deacons: treasurer, clerk, and chairman.

From time to time, elder(s) or deacon(s) may be elected by a members’ meeting to replace elders or deacons that become unavailable, or to add to their number. The number of deacons and elders will be determined by the members’ meeting, considering the size of the congregation and the workload of office bearers. The church will take care to ensure that the biblical requirements described in Titus 1, 1 Tim. 3, 1 Peter 5:3 and elsewhere, are met by those elected to the office of elder and deacon. This includes the biblical requirement that office bearers be godly men.

A members’ meeting may also remove elders or deacons.

Term limits for elders/deacons or other mechanisms for rotation of elders/deacons will be fully discussed and decided by a future members’ meeting.

10. Government by Elders, Deacons, and Members

As set out in the church’s constitution, BBRC is a Reformed church holding to a congregational church polity. Christ is the only Lord of the church. Under Christ and his Word, elders, deacons, and members jointly govern the church.

The elders and deacons will not seek to deal with every matter, but will leave appropriate matters to be decided by the members meetings. The members meetings will likewise not seek to deal with every matter, but will leave to be decided by the elders and deacons those matters that properly resort under the scope of

the office of elder or deacon. In deciding who decides what, regard must be had to appropriate sections in Scripture and the subordinate standards (see e.g. the Bible texts cited in Article 30 of the Belgic Confession), to the Church Order, and to considerations such as the need for efficient day-to-day government of the church.

11. Minister of the Word

BBRC will seek to be served by a preaching elder or preaching pastor to minister the Word and sacraments and perform the duties outlined in the confessional standards and the Church Order of Dordt. The minister must meet the biblical requirements for an elder in Titus 1, 1 Tim.3, 1 Peter 5:3 and elsewhere, and be apt to teach. This includes the requirement to be godly and to be a man. The minister must be well trained theologically, but a degree from an educational institution is not a requirement. Likewise, recognition, credentialing, licensing, or ordination of the minister by any other ecclesiastical body or other power is not required. With respect to calling a minister, BBRC will take care that requirements of the state, other powers, or ecclesiastical bodies do not impose on the liberties of the local church given by Christ Jesus.

12. Preaching

Preaching will be done by an elder of BBRC or, under supervision of the elders, by another male member of BBRC or a visiting preacher. To supply the pulpit ministry, members of BBRC may be requested to read a sermon or to play a pre-recorded sermon at a church service. Visiting preachers must ordinarily be approved by a members' meeting in advance.

13. Requirements for Membership

To be accepted as a member of BBRC, a believer who has come to the age of discretion must be a disciple of Jesus Christ and give biblical evidence of regeneration and true faith. If such a person has not yet publicly professed his faith in an assembly of a Christian church, he or she must make public profession of faith upon being admitted as a member of BBRC. Believers who have not yet been baptized must be baptized upon publicly professing their faith and being admitted as members of BBRC.

14. Profession of Faith

Believers who seek to make profession of faith should communicate their desire to the elders and deacons by writing a letter. One or more elders or deacons will then arrange to meet with the candidate for an interview. The interview will seek to establish if the candidate gives a credible testimony of his or her faith in Jesus Christ as personal savior and demonstrates a solid intellectual understanding of and spiritual consent to the articles of the Christian faith set forth in the Apostle's Creed and the teaching of our church. The candidate will be questioned as to his or her Christian experience, doctrinal beliefs, and seriousness of intention to support wholeheartedly the ministry of the church, and to live for Christ. After this meeting with the candidate, the elders / deacons will report their observations to a members' meeting. The members' meeting will decide whether the candidate should be admitted to do profession of faith, based on the extent to which the person's doctrine and life recommends him or her as a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

15. Church Discipline

BBRC confesses that in order to maintain the order that Christ has given for his church, we must, as stated in the Belgic Confession (Art. 32), "admit only of that which tends to nourish and preserve concord and unity, and to keep all men in obedience to God. For this purpose excommunication or church discipline is requisite, with the several circumstances belonging to it, according to the Word of God." The procedure of

Matthew 18:15–18 and the principles of the Church Order of Dordt will be observed in matters of church discipline. A decision to take the final step of discipline and excommunicate a member must be approved by both an elders /deacons meeting and a members' meeting.

16. Lord's Supper

Lord's Supper is celebrated on the 3rd Sunday in January, April, July, and October. These dates may be subject to change.

All members in good standing can participate in the Lord's Supper. Visiting members of other Christian churches who are in good standing in their churches may be admitted to the Lord's Supper after talking to an elder. Regular attendees of BBRC **can** be admitted to the Lord' Supper by the elders and deacons on a case-by-case basis.

17. Special Church Services

If practical, special church services will usually be held on Good Friday, Resurrection Sunday, Ascension Day, Pentecost Sunday, Reformation Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, the day before New Year, and New Year's Day.

18. Subscription to Confessional Standards

All elders (including the pastor) and deacons will subscribe to the confessional standards of BBRC, i.e. the three ecumenical creeds (Apostolic Creed, Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed) and the three Forms of Unity (Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dordt), as deemed applicable.

19. Liturgical Forms

Liturgical forms used in the public worship of the church are those published in the 1912 Psalter, or revisions of that Psalter that the members' meeting approve:

The Form for the Administration of Baptism, Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper, Form for Excommunication, Form for Readmitting Excommunicated Persons, Form for Ordination of the Ministers of God's Word, and Form for Ordination of Elders and Deacons.

20. Financial Matters

The treasurer is authorized to do the following only with the consent of a members' meeting: • Enter into contracts on behalf of BBRC • Incur debt on behalf of BBRC • Acquire or dispose of real estate on behalf of BBRC.

The treasurer must give a financial report to a members meeting at least once a year.

21. Church Property

Real estate belonging to BBRC must be registered in the church's name.

22. Dissolution

If BBRC should dissolve, all church property will be transferred to another Reformed church that is closely aligned in doctrine and in practice to BBRC, or to a public charity of a Christian nature. It is not required that such a church must have a letter from the IRS confirming their 501(c)(3) status. A vote of 75% of the

total membership entitled to vote (not just of the actual number of votes) is needed to decide the destination of church property upon dissolution.

23. Conflict Resolution

In cases of serious church conflict involving church property, elders or deacons, or several people in the church, BBRC will encourage all members to pray and seek the Lord's Spirit for repentance and humility, and will not unduly delay seeking the counsel of other Christian churches, especially churches that are closely aligned in doctrine and practice, and churches with whom BBRC is connected. In the most serious cases, BBRC will resort to Christian mediation and arbitration rather than civil litigation.

24. Amendment Procedures

The bylaws for "Burning Bush Reformed Church" (BBRC) can be amended with a majority of 60% of the votes at a members meeting. The amended bylaws must be approved by the same percentage of a second vote at a subsequent members meeting before they come into effect.

Date of last amendment: 5/5/2025