Constitution

1. **Name**

The name assumed by this corporation and by which it shall be known in law is Elk Rapids Bible Church.

1. **Purpose**

The purpose of Elk Rapids Bible Church is: to be a place of worship and prayer sanctified to those of Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit; to love and comfort each other in hope; to equip the saints through the teaching of the Word and godly example to utilize their spiritual gifts to do the work of the ministry; to edify the church towards Christlikeness; and to evangelize the lost, all for the glory of God.

1. **Associations**

The church shall be and remain independent and autonomous. Its government is vested in the body of believers who compose its membership. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body. It may affiliate with organizations of like doctrine and conviction for the promotion of the Gospel of Christ, as long as this affiliation does not infringe upon the independence and autonomy of this church.

1. **Membership**

Candidates for church membership shall appear personally before the Pastor(s) and Deacons. Having been recommended by the Pastor(s) and by unanimous vote of the Deacons, the name shall be submitted to the church for acceptance or rejection.

* 1. Qualifications for Membership

Upon a majority vote of the members present at any church service or meeting, membership shall be extended to all who have had, and whose lives evidence:

* + 1. a genuine experience of regeneration through faith in and acceptance of, the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior;
		2. endeavoring to live a consecrated life wholly unto the Lord;
		3. subscribing fully to all church documentation contained herein; these include the Statement of Faith, Constitution, Church Covenant, and Mission Statement;
		4. agreeing to submit to the authority of the church as defined in the Bible and recognized in section B.1 and 2;
		5. complying with any one of the following conditions:
			1. by baptism (immersion) as a true believer in Christ Jesus as personal Savior,
			2. by letter of transfer from another Bible-believing church of like faith and practice, or other written statement of good standing from the prior church if the applicant has been baptized by immersion subsequent to a profession of faith,
			3. by testimony of faith, having been baptized by immersion, or
			4. by restoration, if having been removed from membership, upon majority vote of the congregation after a confession is made publicly before the church membership of the sin or sins involved, and satisfactorily evidencing repentance to the Pastor (or Deacons if the office of Pastor is vacant).
	1. Duties of a Member

On becoming a member of this church, each one covenants:

* + 1. to love, honor, and esteem the church leadership board; composed of Pastor(s) and Deacons;
		2. to pray for them and to recognize their authority in spiritual affairs of the church;
		3. to cherish a brotherly love for all members of the church;
		4. to support the church in prayer;
		5. to support the church in tithes, offerings, and with other financial support as the Lord enables;
		6. to demonstrate a lifestyle affirming the beliefs and practices of the church;
		7. to be involved in the ministries of the church in accordance with their spiritual giftedness;
		8. to be committed to attend all the corporate services of the church. This Biblical requirement is for the encouragement of each believer (Hebrews 10:25).
	1. Privileges of Membership
		1. All church members in good standing spiritually have the privilege of voting (subject to the exception in Article 4, Section C3b), and serving in the church.
		2. Only members at least 16 years of age, who are physically present at a duly called meeting of the church shall be entitled to vote. There shall be no absentee voting and no voting by proxy.
		3. Inactive Members
			1. Members failing to support the church by their attendance within a period of thirty (30) days without a legitimate excuse (such support and excuse to be defined by the Pastor and Deacons) may be placed on the “Inactive List” and lose their right to vote and hold church office.
			2. The Pastor and Deacon Board shall contact, encourage and attempt to restore any inactive member prior to any recommendation or action of dismissal. It shall be the work of the Pastor and Deacon Board two months before each annual meeting to survey the membership roll and to recommend to the church upon its vote, to remove from membership those who have not attended the regular services of the church for a period of one year unless providentially hindered.
			3. Those removed from membership may be restored by application to the Pastor and Deacon Board. The Pastor and Deacon Board may then recommend them to the church to be restored to membership. Those removed through disciplinary action must show evidence of repentance and willingness to comply with the church documentation.
			4. Any active member not present at two of the three Sundays preceding an Annual, Quarterly, or Special meetings forfeits the right to vote for that specific meeting unless there is a legitimate excuse (such support and excuse to be defined by the Pastor and Deacons).
	2. Discipline of a Member
		1. Knowing it is God’s desire to have a “glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27), it is the responsibility of the church and its members to heed God’s desire. Therefore, it may become necessary to exercise discipline in regards to an erring member of our body.
		2. The goal of church discipline is always the restoration of the erring one. This process of discipline and restoration must be exercised in accordance to God’s Word and is found as defined by Christ in Matthew 18:15-17.
		3. Paul commands in Romans 16:17 to “mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them.” This admonition includes heresy, and division (Titus 3:10) and other sins listed by the Apostle Paul as not appropriate in the life of a believer. (I Corinthians 5:11) Therefore, using these Scripture references as truth, Elk Rapids Bible Church will exercise discipline in such above listed cases.
		4. It will be the responsibility of the Pastor with the Board of Deacons to recommend discipline if necessary and to be sure the process in Matthew 18 is followed without deviation. If the sinning member will not repent, a recommendation by the Pastor and Board of Deacons for dismissal of the erring member will ensue. Upon the vote by the membership, a sinning member will be removed from the church membership rolls. (I Corinthians 5:5)
		5. Believers who show repentance will be granted public restoration. It is best if the erring believer first repents before God, and then shows genuine repentance in faithful attendance and conduct. Then at the Lord’s Supper service, the believer speaks to the sin and seeks the forgiveness of the body and restoration to the body.
	3. Termination of Membership

Membership shall be terminated through:

* + 1. Death of the member;
		2. Discipline of a member;
		3. Lack of attendance by a member according to Article IV.C.3.a.; or
		4. Transfer of membership through letter of request by a church of similar faith and practice.
1. **Church Officers**

The officers of the church shall consist of Pastor, Deacons, treasurer/bookkeeper, and clerk, all of whom, except the Pastor, shall have been a member of this church for a period of at least six months before being placed in nomination. The terms of office shall begin on the first of the month following the second Quarterly Meeting. They shall believe in and subscribe to the Statement of Faith, Constitution, Church Covenant, and Mission Statement. Retiring officers shall hold office until the terms of the newly elected officers begin. Other minor offices may be created from time to time as may be deemed necessary. No person shall hold more than two major offices at one time, and no member on the “Inactive” list is eligible to hold office in the church or any of its organizations.

* 1. Pastor
		1. Qualifications: Any Pastoral candidate shall meet the Biblical requirements as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-6, Titus 1:5-9, and Ephesians 4:11,12.
		2. Duties:
			1. The Pastor’s duties are, according to the Scriptures, the giving of himself to prayer, the ministry of the Word, the administration of the ordinances, the pastoral oversight of the flock, and the administration and spiritual welfare of the church. (1 Peter 5:2, Acts 20:28, Acts 6:4)
			2. In addition to his usual Pastoral duties, the Pastor shall serve, or appoint another to serve, as moderator of all business meetings of the church and of the Deacons. He shall be ex-officio member of all organized groups and committees connected with the church. He shall have the privilege of requesting that a meeting of Deacons or committees be called when needed.
			3. The Pastor shall be directly responsible for the worship services and securing pulpit supplies.
			4. The Pastor shall supervise office, maintenance, and service personnel either directly or indirectly through the Deacons. He shall, in consultation with the Deacons, be responsible for the final determination in hiring, dismissing and management of all such personnel.
			5. The Pastor shall develop the overall plan and /or direction for the ministry as a whole in conjunction with the Deacons.
			6. The Pastor shall provide direction for the Sunday and Wednesday studies/service that coincide with the overall purpose of the ministry.
			7. The Pastor shall develop and mentor Deacons for entrance into the ministry of Deacon service.
			8. The Pastor shall keep regular office hours where the members of the church know they can call or walk in the door to seek help with their personal needs.
			9. The Pastor shall agree to a semi-annual review to check the progress of the stated goals and make adjustments as necessary
		3. Selection
			1. Upon notice of resignation or dismissal of a Pastor, the Deacons shall serve, or appoint others to serve, as a pulpit committee. Their task will include evaluating, screening, interviewing prospects, and recommending to the congregation the person whom they feel should be the candidate.
			2. Upon at least a three-fourth (3/4) vote of the Deacons, the pulpit committee shall arrange for the candidate to visit and minister in a church service or services. At this time, members of the church shall be given opportunity to question the candidate, and he shall again be interviewed by the Deacons.
			3. Upon a unanimous recommendation of the pulpit committee, the candidate for the Pastorate shall be elected and extended a call by three-fourth (3/4) vote of qualified church members voting at a special business meeting.
			4. A candidate for Pastor shall be ordained or willing to be ordained after receiving a call from this church. The ordination council must be approved by the church.
			5. The Pastor’s salary shall be fixed at the time of his call and may be changed at any corporate meeting on the recommendation of the Deacons and a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the church members present. He shall be entitled to an annual vacation of not less than two weeks, dates and duration to be agreed upon by the Deacons and Pastor.
		4. Termination
			1. A Pastor shall serve for an indefinite period of time with the right to terminate his Pastorate upon thirty days’ notice.
			2. If at any time a Pastor’s methods or relationship to this church shall be deemed unsatisfactory, the Deacons shall discuss such matters with him and seek to resolve the problem. If the relationship continues to be unsatisfactory, it shall be the responsibility of the Deacons to bring a recommendation to the church as to action required. A special business meeting shall be called for this purpose. A simple majority of votes shall be required for approval of disciplinary measures, which may include dismissal of the Pastor.
			3. Formal accusations against a Pastor shall be submitted in writing, with personal signatures, to an official meeting of the Deacons, and shall not be considered unless supported by the testimony of at least two witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19). If a Pastor errs in doctrine or conduct, the Deacons, in brotherly love, shall attempt to correct him (Galatians 6:1). If the matter cannot be resolved, it shall be brought to the church as per paragraph 4.b above.
			4. In the case of serious error in conduct, the Deacons may suspend a Pastor’s ministry immediately by at least a three-fourth (3/4) vote of the Deacons present in a special meeting, about which all Deacons have been notified as to the day, hour and purpose thereof. Such action shall be followed by procedure described in paragraph 4.b above.
			5. If a Pastor is dismissed because of disciplinary action, he shall vacate the pulpit immediately, but shall receive thirty (30) days pay. If living in a parsonage, he shall vacate the same within thirty (30) days.
	2. Deacons
		1. Qualifications
			1. The Biblical qualifications of a Deacon are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-6.
			2. To be eligible, a candidate for the office of Deacon must be a member for six (6) months and be at least twenty one (21) years of age.
		2. Selection
			1. Deacons shall be chosen from the membership of the church. The number shall be determined by spiritual qualifications and the needs of the congregation at the recommendation of the Pastor and Deacons and upon approval of the congregation. The Pastor and Deacons shall become a nominating committee to whom candidate names will be submitted.
			2. All members of the congregation shall be given the opportunity in writing to submit to the Deacon Board names of persons they suggest as candidate for the office of Deacon. The Deacon Board shall consider, but not be bound by these suggestions.
			3. The Deacon Board shall consider men whom they deem qualified to serve as Deacons, shall secure permission from anyone who is to be nominated, and shall present a ballot of recommended names to the church at the Second Quarterly Meeting. The names of the nominees shall be publicly advertised within the church at least two (2) Sundays prior to the approval process.
			4. Approval shall be by written ballot with a three-fourth (3/4) majority.
		3. Duties
			1. It shall be the duty of the Deacons to assist the Pastor in promoting the spiritual welfare of the church; to be his counselors; to exercise special and prudent watchcare over the church membership in leading by example.
			2. The Deacons shall be stewards of a Deacons’ Fund for the purpose of Christian charity.
			3. They shall assist the Pastor in administering the ordinances.
			4. They, together with the Pastor shall constitute the discipline committee.
			5. The chairman of the Deacons will be responsible for conducting services in the absence of a Pastor.
			6. They shall hold regular monthly meetings.
			7. The Deacons, along with the Pastor, shall be responsible for the examination and approval of all candidates for church membership.
			8. The Deacons shall act as trustees and:
				1. Care for the property of the church, to hold, repair, invest, and preserve the same, including hiring and supervising the janitor, to superintend any improvements that are not entrusted to a special committee, and to perform such business concerns of the church as from time to time may be assigned to them by the church.
				2. At all times be servants of the church and be subject to its corporate actions. They shall not have authority to sell, mortgage, or otherwise encumber the real estate of the church without corporate approval. They shall not have authority to sell, lease, give away, or dispose of church property in any manner to exceed five hundred dollars ($500.00) in value; not to mortgage or encumber the same with debt exceeding the above amount except as the church orders the same by a corporate act.
				3. Care for the financial matters of the church including the preparation and recommendation of the annual budget to the church.
				4. To act as signatories or assign that responsibility when official signatures are necessary for corporate documents. A minimum of two signatures will be required for all such documentation.
		4. Organization
			1. At the first Deacons’ meeting following the election, they shall choose from their number a chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary. If there are two or fewer Deacons, the position of vice-chairman will remain vacant.
			2. The chairman will moderate meetings in the absence of a Pastor.
			3. The secretary shall keep a faithful record of any work, discussions, or transactions performed by the Deacons.
		5. Meetings
			1. The Deacons shall conduct monthly meetings for the purpose of prayer, considering the welfare of the church and for discussion of any business pertinent to their ministry and the life of the church.
			2. A special Deacons’ meeting may be called at the discretion of the Pastor and chairman, or three (3) Deacons.
			3. A majority of the full number of Deacons shall constitute a quorum.
		6. Term of Office - The duration of the office is indefinite, but may be terminated at any time by voluntary resignation, death, inability to perform the duties of Deacon, or dismissal by the church due to violations in Article V. B. 1. The dismissal process will follow that of the Pastor as found in Article V. A. 4.
	3. Other Officers
		1. Qualifications and Eligibility
			1. Other officers shall be members in good standing and must subscribe to and believe in the Statement of Faith, Constitution, Covenant, and Mission Statement.
			2. All officers must be 21 years of age or older.
			3. All officers must be a member for at least six (6) months prior to appointment.
		2. Appointment, Approval, Terms and Duties

The following officers shall be elected by the membership of the church at the second Quarterly Business Meeting.

* + - 1. Church Clerk – The term shall be for one (1) year. The clerk shall keep an accurate and permanent record of all the business meetings of the church, keep records of baptisms and maintain a membership register in which shall be noted such changes as they occur. The Clerk shall be prepared to read the minutes of all business meetings.
			2. Treasurer/Bookkeeper - The term shall be for one (1) year. The Treasurer shall keep a clear, accurate and permanent record of all regular receipts and disbursements. He/she shall disburse when authorized and by check only. He/she shall present monthly and annual reports to the church. He/she shall maintain an accurate record of all monies, keep a confidential record of tithes and offerings and issue annual receipts to donors.
			3. Any other officers deemed necessary for the smooth operation of this church shall be appointed by the Pastor and Deacons and approved by the membership of the church.
		1. Discipline of Officers other than Deacons

Any officer other than a Deacon whose conduct is such that it might bring reproach upon the church or who fails to administer his/her office in a reasonable manner shall be removed from office by the disciplinary committee.

1. **Committees**

The Pastor and Deacons shall give approval for the establishment and leadership of any committees deemed necessary to fulfill the purpose and work of the church with membership approval.

1. **Meetings**
	1. Weekly Meetings – The regular weekly meetings of the church shall include Sunday Worship and Bible study groups/classes for the purpose of prayer, fellowship and Bible study. In the course of these weekly meetings two (2) church ordinances will be observed:
		1. Baptism – Those professing saving faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior shall, by the Pastor or some person authorized by the church, be immersed in water in accordance with the Scriptural teaching. (Colossians 2:12) Immersion shall be prerequisite to church membership. (Romans 1:3-5)
		2. Lord’s Table (Communion) – The Lord’s Table shall normally be served by the Pastor (or some person designated by the church) and the Deacons on the first Sunday of each month, or/and at the discretion of the Deacons. Since it is the Lord’s Table all who have accepted Christ as personal Savior will be invited to participate. (1 Corinthians 11:25-32; Acts 2:40-42) Afterwards there will be a corporate reading of the Church Covenant.
	2. Business Meetings
		1. Annual Business Meeting – An annual business meeting shall be held the last full week of January, or at another date as determined by the Pastor and Deacons. During this meeting the membership will approve the Annual Budget. Also at this meeting the membership will approve the Annual Report for the preceding year.
		2. Quarterly Business Meetings – Three quarterly meetings shall be held during the last full week of April, July, and October, or at such dates as determined by the Pastor and Deacons. During the July quarterly meeting approval of church officers will be voted on.
		3. Special Business Meetings – Special business meetings may be called by the Pastor, or the chairman of the Deacons if the church is without a Pastor. Notice of the purpose and time of special meetings shall be read at the services on two (2) consecutive Sundays or written notice given at least seven (7) days prior. Special meetings may be held at any regular service of the church.
		4. Unless stated otherwise in this Constitution, matters voted upon will be decided by a simple majority of the members present.
2. **Financial Responsibilities**
	1. Fiscal Year – The fiscal year of this church shall begin January 1 and end on December 31 of the same year.
	2. Raising Funds – All funds shall be raised by the free-will tithes, offerings, and gifts of God’s people. Any other fundraising project must meet with Deacon Board approval. This systematic giving of tithes, offerings, and gifts by members and friends for the work of the Lord through this church, is part of worship as well as responsibility.
	3. Financial Transactions – Apart from the allowance of Articles V. B. 3. H. 2) all financial transactions of this church shall be voted on by the church membership during business meetings.
	4. Annual Audit – There shall be an audit of the church finances each year and the results of this audit shall be reported to the body after the Annual Meeting.
3. **Missions**

This church shall be actively engaged in world-wide evangelism and the establishing of new churches according to Matthew 28:19,20 and Acts 1:8. This church shall support missions regularly through prayer, finances, and the commissioning of selected members for the task (Acts 13:2,3). It shall also be the policy of this church to support selected mission boards, Christian schools, colleges, and individuals who are known to be in agreement with our Statement of Faith both in doctrine and practice. For further clarity see The Mission Policy Statement.

1. **Other Ministries of the Church**

It is recognized that the church may have various ministries such as Bible Classes, Men’s and Women’s Fellowships, Youth Groups, Choir, Small Groups, and such other ministries approved by the Pastor and Deacons.

* 1. Relationship to the Church – All ministries shall be considered an integral part of this church. No group shall follow any procedure or adhere to any doctrine that conflicts in any way with the constitution of this church.
	2. Supervision – All ministries shall be under the supervision of the Pastor and Deacons and shall be responsible to the church. The church may call for a report from any ministry, and may dissolve any ministry that ceases to function in harmony with or in fulfillment of the purpose of the church.
	3. Officers – All officers of church ministries shall be members of this church. Any person ceasing to be a member shall automatically forfeit any offices he or she holds in any church ministry, and shall return any property or assets thereof to the church.
1. **Amendments**

This Constitution may be amended at any regular or special business meeting of the church by two-thirds (2/3) majority of the voting members present, provided that the nature of the proposed amendment has been disclosed in writing, and that a copy of the proposed amendment has been available to the church at least two (2) weeks prior to such meeting, and that such meeting has been announced in a regular service on both of the two (2) consecutive Sundays preceding its scheduled time.

1. **Tax Exempt Provisions**
	1. Private Inurement – No part of the net earnings of the church shall inure to the benefit of or be distributable to its members, Deacons, officers, or other private persons, except that the church shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for the services rendered and to make payment and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article II.
	2. Political Involvement – No substantial part of the activities of the church shall be the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. The church shall not participate in, nor intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for any public office.
	3. Racial Nondiscrimination – The church shall have a racially non-discriminatory policy and therefore shall not discriminate against members, applicants, students, and others on the basis of race, color, national, or ethnic origin.
	4. Limitation of Activities – Notwithstanding any other provision of this Constitution, the church shall not, except to an insubstantial degree, engage in any activities or exercise any powers that are not in furtherance of the purposes stated in Article II.
2. **Dissolution and/or Disposal of Property**

Upon the dissolution of the church, the Deacons shall make provisions for the payment of all the liabilities of the church. Such provisions having been made, the Deacons shall then dispose of all the assets of the church to such organization or organizations formed and operated exclusively for religious purposes as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or any corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Code). Assets may be distributed to any tax-exempt organizations that agree with the church’s Statement of Faith.