



Central Florida Association of Reformed Baptists (CFARB)

Doctrinal Standard - The Holy Scriptures summarized in the 2nd London Baptist Confession of Faith (2LCF)

Procedural Standard - Association Constitution

Philosophical Standard - Association Distinctives

Procedural Standard: Association Constitution

Article I. Name and Purpose

1. The name of this body shall be the *Central Florida Association of Reformed Baptists* (CFARB).
2. We are constituting according to our confessional standard, (2LCF 26.14-15).
3. The Association may incorporate in Florida and have a website.
4. We are not a denomination, nor do we seek to exercise authority over Christ's churches. Instead, our voluntary association is a fellowship of local churches that aims to be simple, pastoral, and local.
5. We exist to strengthen churches in Central Florida and spread the gospel together.
6. Our purpose is to glorify God by:
 - A. Commending churches of like faith and practice in Central Florida
 - B. Encouraging faithfulness in worship, doctrine, and pastoral ministry
 - C. Promoting communion through regular fellowship and communication
 - D. Spurring one another on by support and prayer for member churches
 - E. Providing counsel and strengthening churches through mutual accountability
 - F. Cooperating in local efforts such as evangelism, church planting and supporting each other's missions

Article II. Membership

1. Membership Requirements

A member church (including all elders) must:

- A. Be duly constituted with at least one elder (pastor) in Central Florida
- B. Affirm the inerrant and infallible Scriptures as our final rule of faith and practice
- C. Affirm the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy
- D. Affirm the Nashville Statement for Biblical Sexuality

- E. Affirm and subscribe to the 2LCF as its doctrinal standard, understanding that the confession is a collection of doctrines that are to be taken as a whole.
 - i. Agree with the doctrine contained in every chapter and paragraph of the confession, not outright rejecting any doctrine. Yet, recognizing that not every doctrine carries equal weight, nor is uniformity in every word choice, nuance, or specific application necessary for subscription and fidelity
 - ii. Aim for patience and charity in minor areas of the differing interpretation and practice of individual churches, respecting the liberty of conscience
- F. Adhere to the Constitution of this Association to govern its affairs
- G. Embrace the Philosophical Standard of this Association, as expressed in its Association Distinctives, to guide cooperation
- H. Demonstrate faithfulness in worship, the ordinances, church discipline, and mission, both in writing and in practice
- I. Desire fellowship, accountability, and cooperative ministry with sister churches
- J. Agree that our unity and agreement must go beyond confessional subscription alone. And the health of this Association will be dependent upon mature relationships, mutual love and trust as brothers in Christ.
- K. Recognize that the actions of each church and officer reflect upon not only the witness of our Lord Jesus Christ, but the Association as a whole.

2. Membership Process

- A. **Application:** Applying churches will be directed to cfreformedbaptists.com, where they will complete an application form and submit pertinent church documents:
 - i. Applying churches agree with and affirm the 2LCF, CFARB constitution and philosophical standards
 - ii. An applying elder will complete the form and submit pertinent documents
 - iii. All member churches will review the application and vote on reception
- B. **Visitation:** The applicant church sends at least one delegate to a quarterly fraternal meeting prior to application and formal recommendation.
- C. **Sponsorship:** Two member churches must recommend each applicant.
 - i. Recommending church delegates should do due diligence: be familiar with the theology, practice and officers of a sponsored church, read its constitution and bylaws, listen to a sermon and/or make an in person visit
- D. **Vote:** Each member church will receive one vote and agrees to “yes”, “no” or “abstain”. Voting will take place online, initiated by the clerk for that year, requiring a three-quarter ($\frac{3}{4}$) majority vote to receive the applicant into membership.
 - i. For those in various stages of reformation who receive a “no” vote, this is not an indefinite denial. It may require additional counsel from the recommending churches, and reapplication after one year.
- E. **Reception:** Once all the preceding steps are met to majority agreement, the new church is publicly welcomed at the next meeting.

3. Member Responsibilities

- A. Uphold the confession, maintain biblical order and obedience to Christ
- B. Participate in Association meetings and activities, sending a delegate at least twice each year
- C. Commit to fraternal love and patience with our brothers, fellow pastors, in cooperation and counsel
- D. Pray for and encourage sister churches
- E. Support the common work of the Association as able and as needs arise

4. Associate Membership

- A. Associate, non-voting membership will be available for officers of churches in various stages of reformation who can individually hold to the requirements above
- B. Associate members can attend meetings, seek counsel and prayer and should be offered encouragement for their labors of reformation

5. **Withdrawal or Removal**

- A. A church may withdraw at any time by written notice to all churches including reason(s) for resignation
- B. A church may be removed by a three-quarter ($\frac{3}{4}$) majority vote if it persists in doctrinal error, disorderly practice, or failure to uphold associational responsibilities including meeting attendance
- C. Written notice of this decision and the reason(s) must be given to all member churches as well as the excluded church

Article III. Meetings

1. The Association shall gather fraternally four times each year.
2. Delegates must attend at least two fraternal meetings each year.
3. Each church shall be represented by at least one elder, with additional delegates welcome.
4. Meetings will prioritize fraternal fellowship, prayer, counsel and encouragement.
5. Additional virtual meetings may be called by request of two churches, especially in cases of counsel, conflict resolution or business matters for more nuanced discussion, preserving quarterly meetings for fellowship and encouragement.
6. Additional times of informal fellowship, spiritual formation and worship will be offered throughout the year, and participation is strongly encouraged.
7. Regular communication and pre-meeting discussion will be presented in the CFARB WhatsApp channel to concentrate meetings on the focus above.

Article IV. Procedures

1. For organizational purposes, the Association shall elect a clerk annually, who shall be nominated and approved by a three-quarter ($\frac{3}{4}$) majority vote. The clerk will record and coordinate formal communications (applications, votes, additions, removals, tracking of membership, etc.), through the various channels (website, WhatsApp and meetings).
2. Host churches will moderate quarterly gathering discussions, and submit an attendance roll to the clerk with the churches represented.

Article V. Amendments

1. There will be no additional amendments for one full calendar year after constituting.
2. Amendments must be formulated clearly and presented for a yearly review with at least 30 days for consideration and offline discussion prior to review meeting.
3. Amendments must pass with a three-quarter ($\frac{3}{4}$) majority vote.

Article VI. Authority

1. All cooperation in Association efforts by member churches shall be strictly voluntary. The Association will make no demands of a member church beyond its purpose of associating.
2. The Association has authority to determine whether its commendation shall be given to or withheld from an applicant church. It also has power to withdraw commendation from a member church.
 - A. However, the Association cannot take anything from a local church but that which it gives to the church, namely, its conscientious commendation.
3. The Association itself may not sponsor any projects or ministries (such as missionaries).
 - A. Each project or ministry must be under the oversight and authority of a particular local church.
4. The Association may not interfere with the affairs of its member churches. Nevertheless, according to 2LCF 26.15, the Association has a right to offer a recommendation and course of action in formal disputes,

whether for a wanton abuse of its power towards its members, neglect of attendance at Association meetings, or any deviation from the Word of God and the Confession of Faith in teaching or practice. If, within 30 days, satisfactory reasons are not given by the delinquent member church's pastors for its actions or its lack of rectification thereof, the Association has the authority to exclude that church from its good standing in fellowship and associational membership.

5. The limitation of power of the Association shall not prohibit the Association from various functions such as:
 - A. Facilitating the circulation of prayer and information letters to member churches
 - B. Encouraging the voluntary cooperation of local churches in ministry projects such as, but not limited to: church planting, sending career missionaries, short-term missions projects, forming or teaching in pastoral training institutes, publishing and distributing media, utilizing technology, engaging in compassion ministries, and participating in advisory councils for ordinations of church officers
 - C. Participating as local churches in joint meetings such as camps, conferences, pastors/elders conferences or retreats, and seminars
 - D. Offering mutual assistance and sharing of resources, such as but not limited to: exchanging pulpits, lending personnel to meet particular needs (e.g., internships, special classes), sharing material resources (e.g., extra equipment and supplies), and developing curricula
 - E. Raising financial support for pastors or congregations in grievous need on a voluntary basis through gracious generosity to further pastoral care in that congregation or gospel ministry in that city

Article VII. Conflict Resolution

1. For occasions of disagreement or conflict after the process outlined in 2LCF 26.13 has been followed and general prayer and counsel have been sought in accordance with 26.14, a council of three impartial delegates may be formed to provide mediation and recommendation, keeping with 26.15, as outlined below.
 2. In circumstances of difficulties or differences between: member churches in general; or among one church's members which threaten the unity or doctrinal stability of that church; or between members of different churches regarding similar matters; in such cases the pastors of the churches involved shall willingly submit these things for the advice and recommendation of fellow member church pastors for careful, prayerful consideration.
 - A. Resolutions should be sought directly and personally if at all possible (Rom. 12:18), and only then seek a formal process if no resolution among brothers can be reached.
 3. Any petition from a member or members of an Association church regarding complaints against a pastor in their own church must first be made to and through their own pastors. If, after due process (Mt. 18:16-20, 1 Tim. 5:19-20, 2LCF 26.13), a resolution is not reached or the church's pastors will not pursue outside help among the Association, the church member(s) may appeal to the pastor(s) of another member church. If this brings reconciliation to the satisfaction of all parties, the complaint will be considered sufficiently resolved. However, if reconciliation is not attained, the pastor(s) must then make the matter known to the clerk who will inform the pastors of the association and may call a virtual meeting if needed.
 4. In cases of continued difficulty, the association may agree by a three-quarter ($\frac{3}{4}$) majority vote on three impartial delegates (pastors) to form a council to provide a recommendation to the aggrieved parties.
 - A. This course shall be followed in hopes of a resolution before reporting to the entire Association.
 - B. A log of the events shall be kept for the sake of clarity, and if a resolution is not met here, this report will be submitted to the clerk for distribution among all Association members.
 5. This assembled council is not armed with coercive power to compel the churches or their pastors to submit to their decisions. But any church or church's pastors who does not hear the advice or recommendation of the Association in such matters may be demonstrating that it no longer supports the Association. The council will publish the results of its findings, and as deemed necessary, the Association has the prerogative to remove from membership any transgressing church for the good of the cause of Christ, and the purity of the gospel.
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Philosophical Standard: Association Distinctives (Philosophy of Ministry)

Article I. Associational Distinctives

We joyfully affirm the historic convictions of Confessional Reformed Baptists:

1. **Confessional Unity:** We hold to the *1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith* as our doctrinal standard.
2. **Church Autonomy, Shared Fellowship:** Each church governs itself under Christ's authority, but we walk together in love and accountability.
3. **Word-Centered Worship:** Our worship is shaped by Scripture alone and centered on preaching, the ordinances, and prayer; we hold firmly to the ordinary means of grace.
4. **Gospel Mission:** We voluntarily cooperate in evangelism, missions, and church planting both locally and globally.
5. **Mutual Care:** We seek to support, encourage, and strengthen one another through fellowship, counsel, and prayer.
6. **Regional Focus:** We exist especially to strengthen Reformed Baptist witness in Central Florida. The central region of Florida stretches coast to coast, from St. Petersburg to Melbourne, Crystal River to Ormond Beach, and everything in between.

Article II. Practical Ethos

1. This Association's approach will err on the side of simplicity, keeping gospel ministry and local church fidelity as primary.
2. This Association will emphasize and center on local churches and issues that impact our ministry directly. While there may be implications derived from political or national trends, this is not our purpose.
3. This Association will serve as a conduit for fraternal growth in order to co-labor for Christ and His kingdom, this is primarily a fraternal entity rather than a business organization.
4. The associational quarterly meetings will prioritize discussion, prayer, fellowship, encouragement and worship to strengthen inter-church pastoral bonds.
5. This Association will seek to communicate often through a designated WhatsApp chat or formally through email so that our quarterly meetings will be respite from ministerial responsibilities, not an addition to them.

Article III. Associational Benefits

1. **Commendation:** Through mutual trust and agreement, we can recommend local churches and direct discerning saints to them, offering additional accountability and recognition.
 - A. Express visible unity as like-minded churches in Central Florida
2. **Communion:** Through regular communication and meetings, we will establish and grow fraternal relationships among pastors and churches through the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.
 - A. Encourage one another in faithfulness to God's Word
 - B. Enrich fraternal bonds among pastors
 - C. Encourage fellowship and unity among its members
3. **Consolation:** Through regular encouragement and prayer for our sister congregations, we can comfort one another in our labors, lifting up our brothers before the throne of grace.
 - A. Pray for one another and endeavor to know and show greater love amongst our churches, pastors and members
4. **Cooperation:** Through joining together in shared local ministries such as education, conferences, evangelism, and church planting, as well as supporting each other's missions and efforts, we cooperate in the work of the gospel.
 - A. Recommend resources and ministerial helps

B. Assist in pulpit supply and pastoral searches

5. **Counsel:** Through the shared wisdom of a multitude of counselors, we can assist each other in navigating the particular opportunities, needs, and difficulties of our congregations.