

# CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS FOR THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

## ARTICLE I “NAME”

The name of this body shall be RIO GRANDE VALLEY BAPTIST ASSOCIATION; and hereafter shall be called “Association”, serving Cameron, Willacy, Hidalgo, and Starr Counties.

## ARTICLE II “PURPOSE”

The purpose of the Association shall be (1) to aid in the establishment and promotion of missionary, benevolent and educational work within our Associational area; (2) to promote the interest of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ throughout the world in harmonious cooperation with the Baptist General Convention of Texas and/or the Southern Baptist Convention.

## ARTICLE III “MEMBERSHIP” SECTION A “PRINCIPLE”

As basic principle involved in the interpretation of the term “association”, this body holds that the association of churches possesses a two-fold nature. This is it affirms the two-fold sense in which that term shall be used:

**Sub.Sec. 1** – The “Association” is a common fellowship constituted from regular Baptist Churches that are in harmony and cooperation with the objectives set forth in these ByLaws. The word “regular” shall be constructed to mean a church whose membership is made up wholly of individuals who have been Scripturally baptized into a Baptist church of like faith and order.

**Sub.Sec. 2** – As an independent autonomous body at the time authoritatively assembled, it is composed of messengers duly elected by the churches and from such other churches as shall be admitted to its fellowship by an unanimous vote of the assembled messengers at any Annual Meeting of the Association.

## SECTION B “QUALIFICATIONS”

**Sub.Sec. 1** – Churches shall be regularly constituted, independent bodies organized on generally accepted principles common to Southern Baptists.

**Sub.Sec. 2** – The policy of church government for each church shall be congregational so as to assure full and unrestricted control of (1) its membership (2) its component organizations, and (3) its officers.

**Sub.Sec. 3** – The pastors of member churches shall preach and their congregations endorse such doctrines generally believed by Southern Baptists to be taught in the Bible.

**Sub.Sec. 4** – Each church shall cooperate in the fellowship and purpose of the Association and shall contribute regularly to the financial support of the Association by giving at least \$250.00 per year in undesignated donations to the Rio Grande Valley Baptist Association. The donations of the sponsoring church will count as a donation from its mission church(es).

**Sub.Sec. 5** – Each church shall be a member of only one local association, the Rio Grande Valley Baptist Association.

## SECTION C “REPRESENTATION”

Each cooperating church shall elect messengers to the Annual Meeting of the association. Churches shall be entitled to representation on the following basis:

**Sub.Sec. 1** – Churches with a resident membership of three hundred (300), or less, shall be entitled to five messengers.

**Sub.Sec. 2** – Churches with a resident membership of more than three (300) members shall be entitled to one (1) additional messenger for each additional one hundred (100) resident members or major fraction thereof;

**Sub.Sec. 3** – No church shall have more than fifteen (15) messengers.

**Sub.Sec. 4** – Because of the unique nature of the work of the Rio Grande Valley Baptist Association, all congregations, missions and churches, shall be entitled to representation on the same basis as set out in Sub.Sec.1 and Sub.Sec. 2.

#### **SECTION D “SEATING OF MESSENGERS”**

**Sub.Sec. 1** – Messengers from the churches shall be seated upon certification by the clerk of their election by their respective churches.

**Sub.Sec. 2** – It shall be the privilege of any member to challenge the seating of the messengers of any church. Such challenge must be presented in writing and may be based on only one or more of the four (4) qualifications set out in Section B of this article.

**Div. A** - The challenged messengers shall have the right to vote until their case shall have been decided by a majority vote of messengers present and voting in open session.

**Div. B** - If the body wishes, the matter may be dealt with immediately with equal time being given to the challenged and/or challengers.

**Div. C** - If, however, the body wishes to proceed with the order of the day, the matter shall be referred to the Committee of Credentials for study and recommendation at some other hour during the Annual Meeting, or at a special meeting of the Association, subsequent to the Annual Meeting.

**Div. D** - In any case, the challenged messengers shall have the right of defense and/or refutation.

#### **SECTION E “RECEPTION INTO THE FELLOWSHIP”**

**Sub.Sec. 1** – Any new church desiring representation in the Association shall be at least one year old at the time of the Annual Meeting of the Association. Application shall be made at least sixty (60) days before the first session of the Annual Meeting of the Association through a petitionary letter presented by messengers duly elected by the applying church, stating:

**Par. (1)** – The manner by which the church was constituted; and,

**Par. (2)** – That the church has adopted the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message and a Church Covenant consistent with the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message; and,

**Par. (3)** – That the church is contributing to the Rio Grande Valley Baptist Association, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and/or the Southern Baptist Convention through the Cooperative Program.

**Sub.Sec. 2** – A mission that has become a church must have been constituted a church at least thirty (30) days prior to the first session of the Annual Meeting of the Association and application shall be made at least thirty (30) days prior to the first session of the Annual Meeting of the Association through a petitionary letter presented by the messengers duly elected by the applying church.

**Sub.Sec. 3** – If the Committee on Petitionary Letters finds that the applying church or mission qualifies according to the requirements in Section B of this Article, it shall present its report as the first order of business in the first session after the Annual Meeting has been organized. The recommendation to accept the petitioning church, will then proceed only if there is representation of that church, in the session of the same annual meeting. The principle of unity of fellowship among the churches, as expressed by a UNANIMOUS VOTE in the admission of new churches, shall be observed. In the case of objection, the matter will be referred to the petitionary letters

committee immediately without discussion to determine in conference with the objectors, whether the objection involves the matter of fellowship between or among the churches. Recommendation must be carried by a 75% majority roll call vote of the messengers present. The Moderator shall then extend the hand of fellowship for the Association.

## SECTION F “LETTERS AND REPORT”

Each church in the fellowship of the Association shall furnish Annual letters containing detailed information as to membership, finances, and statistics concerning the various organizations of the church and other such data revealing the spiritual condition of the reporting church. This report shall be admitted on a form approved by the Association.

## SECTION G “MEETINGS”

The Association shall meet annually at such time and place as may be agreed upon by the Association.

## ARTICLE IV “JURISDICTION”

**Sub.Sec. 1** – The Association does not claim for itself any authority or ecclesiastical jurisdiction over any church in the fellowship either in its origin, in its act of constitution into a church or in the conduct of its own affairs.

**Sub.Sec. 2** – However, since the qualifications of a church (as set forth in Section B – Article III) to hold membership in its fellowship are matters which involves the harmonious working together of the church, the Association, when authoritatively assembled, shall reserve for itself certain rights, namely:

**Div. A** – It shall be the sole judge of the membership of its own body.

**Par. (1)** – It shall determine in the Annual Meeting the qualifications and fitness of its owns membership, both as to churches of the common fellowship, and as to the individual messengers.

**Par. (2)** – It reserves the right to deny membership to the messengers of any church.

**Div. B** – It shall have the right to inquire into matters involving regularity, polity spirit of the cooperation of a church.

**Par. (1)** – Following such inquiry, the church under criticism shall be given a hearing in an open meeting of the Association.

**Par. (2)** – To avoid friction, the Association may recommend to any group contemplating the formation of a new church to seek the counsel of its officers as to the advisability of establishing a new church in the geographical area it proposes to locate itself.

**Div. C** – It may sever its relations with any church that in its judgment, as determined in open session, may have erred from the faith and practice expressed in the New Testament as commonly held by Southern Baptists and which shall fail to meet the above qualifications for a church to hold membership in its fellowship.

**Par. (1)** – The Association shall take such action only after the Credentials Committee has conferred with the church in an attempt to work out the differences.

**Par. (2)** – If a thorough and prayer guided investigation justifies, the Association may declare in open session the messengers of such church no longer members of the Association, upon a majority vote of the messengers present and voting.

## SECTION B “RELATIONS OF MEMBER CHURCHES”

**Sub.Sec. 1** – It shall be the duty of each church in the fellowship to contribute regularly to the work of Baptists as fostered by:

**Div. A** – The Rio Grande Valley Baptist Association

**Div. B** – The Baptist General Convention of Texas

**Div. C** – The Southern Baptist Convention

**Sub.Sec. 2** – Any churches failing to contribute to such denominational missionary programs for a period of one year or longer shall be strongly encouraged in brotherly love to grow in the spirit of mission giving.

## ARTICLE V “OFFICERS”

**Sub.Sec. 1** – The body of the Association annually shall elect persons to serve as Moderator, Associate-Moderator, Clerk, Assistant Clerk and Treasurer who shall be known as Executive Officers of the Association.

**Sub.Sec. 2** – The body shall annually elect five (5) persons to serve as Trustees for the Association.

**Sub.Sec. 3** – The body annually shall elect Administrative Officers for the component unit organizations:

**Div. A** – Director of Sunday School

**Div. B** – Director of Church Training

**Div. C** – Director of Brotherhood

**Div. D** – Director of Music

**Div. E** – Director of Library Services

**Div. F** – Director of Woman’s Missionary Union

**Div. G** – Director of Aging

**Div. H** – Director of Youth

**Div. I** – Director of Winter Ministries

**Div. J** – Director of Spanish Speaking Fellowship

**Div. K** – Director of Stewardship Promotion

**Sub.Sec. 4** – Other officers shall include the chair-person of standing Associational Committees and other officers as needs arise. These shall also be Administrative Officers.

## SECTION B “METHOD OF ELECTION”

**Sub.Sec. 1** – Executive Officers shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee at the first session of the Annual Meeting, after which opportunity shall be given for nominations from the floor. If there is more than one nomination for any office, that vote shall be by ballot. They shall be elected by majority vote during the last session of the Annual Meeting. Those elected shall assume their office at the close of the final session of this meeting.

**Div. A** – No person shall serve as Moderator for more than two (2) years in successive order.

**Div. B** – These shall be presented as nominees at the July meeting of the Executive Board.

**Sub.Sec. 2** – The Trustees and Administrative Officers shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the Association, however, in order to facilitate the promotion of their respective programs and committees the directors and chairpersons shall be presented as nominees by the Nominating Committee to the Executive Board in its July meeting, and nominated and elected on the last day of the Annual Meeting.

## SECTION C “FUNCTION AND DUTIES”

**Sub.Sec. 1** – The functions and duties of the Executive Officers shall include:

**Div. A** – The Moderator shall preside at all meetings of the Association. He shall be an ex officio member of all committees, attending any and all such meetings with personal privilege of discussion as he deems necessary but without the power of committee vote. He also shall serve as Chairman of the Executive Board.

**Div. B** – The Associate-Moderator shall preside at the meetings of the Association in the absence of the Moderator he shall succeed the Moderator to position of Moderator in the case of vacancy of that office. The Executive Board shall then elect a person to fill the vacancy of Associate –Moderator so created.

**Div. C** – The Clerk shall keep an accurate record of the proceedings of the Association and shall supervise the printing of the minutes, and attend to such work as belong to his office.

**Div. D** – The Assistant Clerk shall assist the clerk in any way deemed advisable in the dispatch of the Clerk’s duties. In the event the Clerk should become unable to perform his duties, this officer shall serve as Clerk, until the next Annual Meeting of the Association.

**Div. E** – The Treasurer shall receive and disburse all funds belonging to the Association as the Association may direct. Monthly reports shall be furnished to the Association’s Executive Board and Annual Report to the Association.

**Sub.Sec. 2** – The Trustees shall be official legal representatives for the Association in all legal matters involving property, personal or real, and such other functions as the Executive Board may direct.

**Sub.Sec. 3** – The Administrative Officers of the organization all perform the duties ordinarily associated with their respective offices and shall direct and promote the work of their organizations and committees in the best manner possible. Although these officers are elected annually, they shall be eligible for re-election as often as it is mutually agreeable between such officers and the Association.

**Sub.Sec. 4** – All officers shall assume their duties at the close of the Annual Meeting and shall serve through the next Annual Meeting or until their successors shall be elected.

## SECTION D “VACANCIES”

The Executive Board shall elect successors for al vacancies occurring between the Annual Meeting of the Association for the remaining portion of the Associational year when no provision for filling vacancies have been made in these ByLaws.

## ARTICLE VI “EXECUTIVE BOARD”

### SECTION A “MEMBERSHIP”

**Sub.Sec. 1** – The pastor and full-time staff members of each cooperating church, and/or the pastor of each Mission sponsored by a cooperating church and the officers of the Association shall be members of the Board.

**Sub.Sec. 2** – Two (2) additional Board members shall be nominated by each church and/or mission and such nominations shall be certified in and by that church’s Annual Letter to the Association. Churches with a resident membership above 500 members shall be eligible for an additional elected member for each 500 resident members, or major fraction thereof. No church shall be eligible for more than four (4) elected members.

**Div. A** – Each nominee shall possess a missionary spirit and manifest a strong interest in the program of the Association.

**Div. B** – These nominees for the Executive Board from the cooperating churches shall be subject to elect by the Association in its Annual Meeting.

## **SECTION B “MEETINGS”**

**Sub.Sec. 1** – The Executive Board shall hold monthly meetings.

**Sub.Sec. 2** – Should any special meetings be deemed necessary, the Chairman shall be empowered to call such meetings after a five (5) day notice to all Board members.

## **SECTION C “FUNCTION”**

**Sub.Sec. 1** – The Board shall serve as the Executive Board for the Association between its Annual Meeting and shall have charge of its missionary, benevolent and educational ministries.

**Sub.Sec. 2** – In the event of vacancies among the Trustees, Officers, of any Standing Committee between Annual Meetings of the Association, the Nominating Committee shall recommend persons to the Board to be elected to fill the existing vacancies until the next Annual Meeting of the Association.

## **SECTION D “OFFICERS”**

**Sub.Sec. 1** – The Executive Officers for the Executive Board shall be the elected Executive Officers of the Association; namely, Moderator, Associate-Moderator, Clerk, Assistant Clerk and Treasurer.

**Sub.Sec. 2** – The Board shall have authority to elect and employ such Associational staff personnel as follows, as deemed necessary:

**Div. A** – Director of Missions shall be elected by the Board to serve as long as it is mutually agreeable. He shall maintain the Associational office and direct such employed personnel as may be necessary for effective ministry of the Association in conjunction with such appropriate committees as elected by the Association.

**Div. B** – The Board shall elect and employ Missions Associates as they feel may be necessary in expanding the total ministry of the Association. Such elected personnel shall be responsible to the Director of Missions and to the Association as set forth in written job descriptions authorized by the Board.

**Div. C** – The Association Missionary staff personnel shall be ex officio members of all boards and committees with the privilege of making recommendations and entering into all discussions but without power to vote.

## **SECTION E “ASSOCIATIONAL COUNCIL”**

**Sub.Sec. 1** – The Associational Council shall be made up of:

**Div. A** – The duly elected Executive Officers of the Association: namely Moderator, Associate-Moderator, Clerk, Assistant Clerk, Treasurer.

**Div. B** – The duly elected Administrative Officers of the component organizations and Committee Chairpersons as set out in Article V, Sub.Sec. 3 and Sub.Sec. 4.

**Div. C** – the Associational Staff officers namely Director of Missions and Missions Associate who shall serve as ex officio members.

**Sub.Sec. 2** – This Council, in its advisory capacity, shall have no powers other than herein stated or as may be assigned by the Executive Board.

**Div. A** – The Council shall plan the agenda for the meeting of the Executive Board, making such reports deemed necessary. Resolutions and Letters, that are requested on behalf of the Executive Board or Rio Grande Valley Baptist Association will be deferred to the Associational Council for discussion. After the discussion the resolution, or letter

will be presented in writing to the subsequent Executive Board meeting for consideration and action.

**Div. B** – The Council shall serve as the Associational Budget Committee, preparing the proposed Annual Associational Budget recommendations:

**Par. (1)** – Such Budget recommendations shall include the necessary expenses for the Standing Committees.

**Par. (2)** – Such Budget recommendations shall be presented to the Executive Board at least thirty (30) days prior to the Annual Meeting of the Association.

**Par. (3)** – After approval by the Executive Board the Proposed Budget shall be presented to and for adoption in the Annual Meeting of the Association.

**Par. (4)** – The Director of Missions or a Missions Associate shall moderate the Council.

**Div. C** – The Council shall meet at such times as it shall set for itself for making adequate preparation and necessary reports to the stated meeting of the Executive Board.

## **ARTICLE VII “AMENDMENTS”**

### **SECTION A “PROPOSALS”**

Any and all proposals for changes, revision and/or amendments to these ByLaws shall be presented in writing to the committee on ByLaws at least thirty (30) days prior to the first session of the Annual Meeting of the Association.

### **SECTION B “AMENDMENTS”**

**Sub.Sec. 1** – Such recommended amendment or amendments shall be presented to the Association in the first session of the Annual Meeting by the ByLaws Committee.

**Sub.Sec. 2** – Action on such proposed amendment or amendments shall be deferred to some subsequent session of this same Annual Meeting.

**Sub.Sec. 3** – All such amendments shall and must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the messengers present and voting.

## **ARTICLE VIII “ORDER OF BUSINESS”**

**Sub.Sec. 1** – The latest edition of Robert’s Rules of Order shall govern the deliberation of this body.

**Sub.Sec. 2** – The Moderator may have the advice of a parliamentarian if he so chooses.

## **ARTICLE IX “DISSOLUTION”**

The Association is organized and operated primarily for the purpose set forth under Article II “Purpose” of this Constitution. The Association is to be operated in such a way that it does not result in the accrual of distribution profits, realization of private gain resulting from payment of compensation in excess of a reasonable allowance for salary or other compensation for services rendered, or realization of any other form of private gain.

The Association pledges its assets for use in performing the Association’s religious and charitable functions. The Association directs that on discontinuance of the Association by dissolution or otherwise, the assets are to be transferred to another religious, charitable or similar organization, that qualifies under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, or the corresponding provisions of any subsequent United States Internal Revenue law or laws.