

# The Constitution of the Bethel Baptist Church

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## **The Constitution**

### **ARTICLE I. NAME.**

The name of this church shall be the Bethel Baptist Church of 6370 New Carlisle Pike, Springfield, OH, 45504.

### **ARTICLE II. Mission Statement**

The mission of this church shall be the advancement of the Kingdom of God. It shall seek to attain this via the public worship of God (Hebrews 10:25), the preaching of the Gospel (Romans 10:14), consistent Christian living by its members (1 John 2:6), personal evangelism (Acts 1:8), intentional mission and outreach (Matthew 28: 19-20), Christian fellowship (Acts 2:44, 46), and personal and spiritual growth (Ephesians 4:13).

### **ARTICLE III. OUR BAPTIST IDENTITY**

The government of this church shall be vested in the body which composes its membership. It shall, however, maintain affiliation and cooperation with the Western Association, the American Baptist Churches of Ohio, and the American Baptist Churches USA.

### **ARTICLE IV. DECLARATION OF DOCTRINE AND PRINCIPLES.**

This church recognizes the Holy Scriptures as an all-sufficient basis of doctrine and practice. As a summary of principles for Christian conduct among its members, it adopts the following Church Covenant commonly accepted by Baptist Churches:

#### **CHURCH COVENANT**

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and compassion; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines, to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and spread of the Gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to teach our children the Christian truths; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings; faithful in our engagements; exemplary in our deportment; to avoid excessive

anger; to abstain from use of intoxicating drink; to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to be slow to take offense, and quick to secure reconciliation; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Savior.

We moreover engage that when we leave this church, we will as soon as possible unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of the covenant and principles of God's Word.

#### **STATEMENT OF FAITH**

- The Bible – We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God.
- God the Father – We believe God is the one true God, existing eternally in three persons.
- God the Son – We believe in Jesus Christ, God the Father's only begotten Son, born of a virgin, crucified, and was resurrected.
- God the Holy Spirit – We believe in the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity.
- Man – We believe God made man in His own image.
- Sin – We believe that subsequent to man's creation, they fell into sin resulting in spiritual death.
- Salvation – We believe that salvation is a complete and eternal salvation by God's grace alone thru Jesus Christ.
- The Church – We believe the church consists of all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- End Times – We believe Christ's return to earth will be personal, visible, and is imminent to remove His Church from the earth.

#### **ARTICLE V. MEMBERSHIP.**

##### **Section 1. Qualifications.**

Any person who confesses Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and who is baptized by immersion may be received into the fellowship of this church.

##### **Section 2. Admission of Members.**

Persons who have met the above qualifications may be received into membership by any of the following methods, subject in each case to the recommendations of the Board of Deacons, and/or the Pastor and the vote of the church:

- A. By Baptism
- B. By Letter of Transfer
- C. By Experience
- D. Restoration (prior member)

**Section 3. Dismissal of Members.**

A. By Death

B. By Letter. Any member in good standing who desires a letter of transfer to any other church may receive it upon request and upon the recommendation of the Board of Deacons. The name of the church to which membership is requested shall be named in the request and the letter shall be sent to the pastor or clerk of the church.

C. By Exclusion. Should any member become an offense to the church and to its good name by reason of immoral or unchristian conduct or by consistent breach of his/her covenant vows, the church may terminate membership but only after due notice and a hearing before the Board of Deacons, and after faithful efforts have been made to bring such member to repentance and amendment.

**Section 4. Members.**

**4a. Active List**

The Deacons shall review and prepare a list that includes members who are active in church activities either physically or financially. This also includes shut-ins who are unable to attend due to health issues.

**4b. Membership List**

The Deacons shall review and prepare a list that includes all members (including the Active List). The deacons shall review annually.

**ARTICLE VI. THE PASTORATE.**

**Section 1. Calling a Senior Pastor.**

In the event of a vacancy in the pastorate, the Board of Deacons shall act as a pulpit committee and identify at least 1, but not more than 2, biblically led church members for the express purpose of recommending a prospective pastor to the church. They shall also make arrangements for interim pastoral services.

The committee shall be guided in its work of selecting a prospective pastor by recommendations published by the Commission on the Ministry of the American Baptist Churches USA and shall work in close cooperation with the regional minister of the American Baptist Churches of Ohio.

The pastor shall be an ordained Minister whose credentials are recognized by the American Baptist Churches of Ohio or willing to pursue this ordination within a reasonable agreed timeframe. The pastor shall be expected to preach the Gospel, administer the ordinances, watch over the membership, have charge of the spiritual welfare of the congregation and the stated services of worship. They shall be a member of all boards and committees of the church and its auxiliary organizations.

When the committee is ready to propose a prospective pastor, it shall send a letter by first class mail to each active member of the church, at least one week prior to the visit of the prospective pastor. The letter shall contain the following:

- A. The name and qualifications of the prospective pastor,
- B. the date of the visit, and
- C. the date and time of the meeting of the church membership at which the proposal of the pulpit committee will be acted upon.

The call of a pastor shall be by secret ballot and shall require a minimum of eighty-five percent (85%) vote of those active members present and voting. (The percentage may be higher if recommended by the committee). A quorum of fifty percent (50%) of the active membership shall be required. The Board of Deacons shall act as a pastoral relations committee.

### **Section 2. Continuance of Relationship.**

The pastoral relationship shall continue for an indefinite term, so long as the relationship is mutually satisfactory to the pastor and the membership of the church. To determine a mutually satisfactory relationship, a vote of confidence may be taken only at the recommendation of the Board of Deacons. Those voting shall be the active members present. The vote shall be taken to determine the effectiveness of the ministry. The percentage needed to continue the relationship shall be determined by the Board of Deacons.

### **Section 3. Termination of Relationship.**

The pastoral relation may be terminated in the following ways:

- A. A letter of resignation from the pastor, or
- B. A vote of termination by the church membership. Notice of such action shall have been sent by first class mail to each active member one week prior to the date of the meeting.

The termination of the pastoral relationship shall be validated by secret ballot and have reached a majority vote. A quorum of fifty percent (50%) of the active membership shall be required.

The pastoral relationship shall be terminated only upon thirty (30) days notice, by either party, or by mutual consent.

## **ARTICLE VII. OFFICERS.**

ALL OFFICERS, BOARDS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS MUST BE MEMBERS OF BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH; BOARDS AND COMMITTEES MAY INCLUDE NON-MEMBERS AS LONG AS MEMBERS CONSTITUTE A MAJORITY unless otherwise stated.

**Section 1. Senior Pastor.**

The pastor shall preach the gospel, administer the ordinances, watch over the membership, have charge of the spiritual welfare of the congregation and the stated services of public worship. The Senior Pastor shall be a member of all boards and committees of the church and its auxiliary organizations. The Senior Pastor shall be responsible for the leadership and mentoring of the paid ministry staff positions with the assistance of the deacons. In the absence of a full-time senior pastor, the Deacons will assume and oversee the paid ministry staff positions.

**Section 2. Moderator.**

The moderator shall preside over all advisory council meetings and business meetings of the church. In their absence, the Chairman of the Board of Deacons shall preside. The Moderator shall be elected to serve for one year and shall not serve for more than (3) three consecutive terms. It is the responsibility of the moderator to preside in a fair and impartial manner.

**Section 3. Clerk.**

A clerk shall be elected to serve for one year and shall keep a complete record of the transactions of all business at the meetings of the church, which shall be read for approval at the next meeting. They shall keep a record of the names and addresses of members, with dates of baptism, and dates and method of admission and dismissal. They shall notify all officers and committee members of their election and appointment. The clerk shall issue letters of dismissal and recommendations and preserve on file all communications and written reports. They shall assist in preparing denominational reports. The clerk shall deliver to their successor all books and records for which they have been responsible as clerk. The Clerk may select an assistant as deemed necessary.

**Section 4a. Treasurer.**

A treasurer shall be elected to serve for one year. They shall draw all checks in the name of the church. The Treasurer shall keep separate records of all funds raised and contributed for particular purposes, and no funds shall be disbursed by them except for the purpose for which they were raised or contributed. They shall have custody of all securities, investments, title papers and disburse funds of the church in accordance with the action of the church, or by the order of the Board of Trustees. They shall present to the church an itemized report of the receipts and disbursements showing the actual financial condition of the church at each quarterly business meeting. The Treasurer shall make other such financial reports as may be desired by the church or Board of Trustees. Their books shall be submitted to the Auditing Committee for annual audit. The Treasurer shall deliver to their successor all books, records and funds in their care.

**Section 4b. Assistant Treasurer.**

An assistant treasurer shall be elected to serve for one year. They shall be trained in the treasurer's position and serve in absence of the treasurer.

**Section 5a. Missionary Treasurer.**

A missionary treasurer shall be elected to serve for one year. They shall disburse funds periodically to cover items as specified in the missions budget. Other missionary funds shall be applied by them in accordance with the church budget and the special purposes for which the same are contributed. They shall present to the church an itemized report of receipts and disbursements, showing the actual financial condition of the Board of Missions at each quarterly business meeting. They shall make other such financial reports as may be desired by the church. They shall be a member of the Board of Missions. Their books shall be submitted to the auditing committee for an annual audit. They shall deliver to their successor all books and records pertaining to their office.

**Section 5b. Assistant Missionary Treasurer.**

An assistant missionary treasurer shall be elected to serve for one year. They shall be trained in the missionary treasurer's position and serve in absence of the missionary treasurer.

**Section 6a. Financial Secretary.**

A financial secretary shall be elected to serve for one year. They shall receive the funds of the church and make all deposits weekly in the name of the church. It shall be their duty to keep a confidential record of all monies received for church expenses and missionary contributions. The financial secretary shall keep a record of monies given and shall give a report to the individuals for their total contributions at the close of the calendar year. It shall be their duty to make available offering envelopes for contributions to the church. The Financial Secretary shall give a report of the total contributions for the church expenses and missions at each quarterly business meeting. They shall deliver to their successor all books and records pertaining to their office.

**Section 6b. Assistant Financial Secretary.**

An assistant financial secretary shall be elected to serve for one year. They shall be trained in the financial secretary's position and serve in the absence of the financial secretary.

**Section 7. Sunday School Secretary.**

A Sunday School Secretary shall be elected to serve for one year. They shall be responsible for taking attendance, collections, and counting all contributions. They shall pass the Sunday School offering to the Financial Secretary. The Secretary may select an assistant as deemed necessary.



## **Article VIII. Boards**

### **Section 1. Board of Deacons.**

The Board of Deacons will be comprised of at least six (6) members. They shall be elected annually from the membership of the church for a term of three years. The board shall select a chairperson and secretary annually. The chairperson or representative shall submit a quarterly report to the church body on matters in its charge, an annual report listing the past year's activities and upcoming years' goals, and attend the Advisory Council and Business meetings. The board shall meet Bi-monthly or more often if needed. Special meetings may be called as deemed necessary by its members and a majority of the members present shall constitute a quorum.

The Deacons shall be responsible in assisting the Senior Pastor with the spiritual growth of the church. The board shall consider with the Senior Pastor, all applicants for church membership and all requests for letters of transfer or dismissal; cooperate with the Senior Pastor in providing the pulpit supply and leaders of the prayer meeting as needed; visit the members, care for the sick, needy, and distressed members of the church, using the Deacon's Relief Funds as needed. The deacons shall promote Christian instruction and ministry to the church membership, provide for the Lord's Supper and aid in its administration, assist in baptismal services, act as pastoral relations committee and act as a pulpit committee in calling a pastor (see Article VI: Section 1). The Deacons shall be responsible for the hiring of paid ministry staff positions with the assistance of the Senior Pastor. The Deacons shall assist the Senior Pastor in the leadership, mentoring, and supervision of the paid ministry staff positions. In the absence of full time senior pastor, the Deacons will assume and oversee the paid ministry staff positions.

### **Section 2. Board of Christian Education.**

The Board of Christian Education will be comprised of at least three (3) members and/or friends of the church. They shall be elected annually from the membership of the church for a term of three years. The board shall select a chairperson and secretary annually. The chairperson or representative shall submit a quarterly report to the church body on matters in its charge, an annual report listing the past year's activities and upcoming years goals, and attend the Advisory Council and Business meetings. The board shall meet Bi-monthly or more often if needed. Special meetings may be called as deemed necessary.

Christian Education is responsible for the evaluation, organization, implementation, and/or monitoring of the entire educational program of the church. This includes developing, maintaining, recommending, and providing educational materials, programs, or activities through a variety of ways to

engage in meaningful growth in Christianity, including Bible studies, book studies, and dialogue for children, youth, & adults.

### **Section 3. Board of Missions & Outreach.**

The Board of Missions & Outreach will be comprised of at least six (6) members and/or friends of the church. They shall be elected annually from the membership of the church for a term of three years. The board shall select a chairperson and secretary annually. The chairperson or representative shall submit a quarterly report to the church body on matters in its charge, an annual report listing the past year's activities and upcoming years' goals, and attend the Advisory Council and Business meetings. The board shall meet Bi-monthly or more often if needed. Special meetings may be called as deemed necessary.

The Missions & Outreach Team shall seek to communicate current and potential mission and outreach opportunities, generate interest and support for missions and outreach, form partnerships with other communities of faith to extend reach to others, and support the mission efforts of American Baptist Churches of Ohio and American Baptist Churches USA. The Missions & Outreach Team shall prepare a budget to be presented at the annual church business meeting for approval and revision.

### **Section 4. Board of Trustees.**

The Board of Trustees will be comprised of at least six (6) members and/or friends of the church. They shall be elected annually from the membership of the church for a term of three years. The board shall select a chairperson and secretary annually. The chairperson or representative shall submit a quarterly report to the church body on matters in its charge, an annual report listing the past year's activities and upcoming years' goals, and attend the Advisory Council and Business meetings. The board shall meet Bi-monthly or more often if needed. Special meetings may be called as deemed necessary.

The Trustees shall hold in trust all property belonging to the church and shall take all measures for its protection, management, and upkeep. It shall determine the use of the church building for all extra or secular purposes, but it shall have no power to buy, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property without a specific vote of the church authorizing such action. It shall designate the bank where the church funds shall be deposited. Expenses relating to the protection, management, and upkeep of the church property, not included in the budget, shall be approved by the Board of Trustees. They board shall procure non-ministry services through direct hire or contract as needed and oversee and direct their performance. Trustees are also responsible for Information Technology in the facility and the associated licensing of products utilized. Trustees shall perform other duties as imposed upon it by the church and the state.

## **ARTICLE IX. STANDING COMMITTEES.**

The following standing committees shall consist of not less than three (3) members and shall be appointed by the Advisory Council, unless otherwise provided:

### **Section 1. Budget Committee.**

The budget committee shall consist of the church treasurer, financial secretary, pastor, and the board of trustees. It shall be chaired by the chairman of the board of trustees. Input for budget requests need to be submitted by the end of October to the trustees. The committee shall annually prepare a budget to be presented to the Advisory Council prior to the annual business meeting at the end of each calendar year for approval by the church.

### **Section 2. Nominating Committee (3).**

The nominating committee shall prepare a list of those qualified to fill the various offices at least thirty (30) days prior to the election of the church officers. It shall vet by interview and background each nominee proposed and ascertain his or her willingness to serve if elected. It shall endeavor to nominate more than one person for each office to be filled and report to the church at least two (2) weeks before the election is held. This committee shall consist of the Senior Pastor, 1 representative from the Boards (trustees, deacons, CE, Missions), and 3 additional general church members.

### **Section 3. Music Committee (3).**

The music committee shall be responsible for the selection of choristers, organists, pianists, and choir directors, and for the arrangement of the music for the church services. It shall incur expenses only as authorized by the church. Paid music staff must chair the committee and provide suggestions for committee members.

### **Section 4. Welcoming & Ushering Committee. (2)**

The Welcoming & Ushering Committee shall attend to the seating of the congregation and the receiving of the offering, except as otherwise provided. Take responsibility of scheduling individuals to greet people at the doors, welcome new visitors, and pass out information.

### **Section 5. Hospitality Committee. (2)**

The Hospitality Committee shall plan and coordinate funeral dinners, assist boards and other committees with other special meals, maintain, organize, and stock the kitchen area.

### **Section 6. Auditing Committee. (2)**

The Auditing Committee shall annually audit the financial records of the church, including the records maintained by the church treasurer, missionary treasurer, or any financial accounts associated to Bethel, submit a written report to the church at the time of the first quarterly meeting following the

annual meeting or at the request of the church. The Auditing Committee must be available if asked by the Board of Trustees to perform any special audits if necessary.

**Section 7. Flower Committee. (2)**

The Flower Committee shall provide an appropriate memorial gift for any of the church family during illness or at the time of death, at the discretion of the committee. It shall be responsible for planning the display of flowers in the sanctuary for the worship service. It shall oversee the decoration of the sanctuary for special occasions.

**ARTICLE X. AMERICAN BAPTIST WOMEN'S MINISTRIES.**

American Baptist Women's Ministries is an organization within the church, affiliated with the American Baptist Women's Ministries of the Western Association, the American Baptist Women's Ministries of Ohio, and the national organization of the American Baptist Women's Ministries.

The purpose of this organization is to unite all women of our church into a fellowship that will help each one to grow in personal devotion to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and in commitment to the mission of His church through worshipping, working, and witnessing in all areas of life, the home, the community, the nation, and the world.

All women are invited to participate in American Baptist Women's Ministries. Each woman is encouraged to participate according to her own needs, interests, and gifts as led by the Spirit of God.

The President shall be the official representative of the organization, coordinating and promoting all plans and policies affecting women's work within the church. The officers and chairperson are elected in accordance with the organization's Constitution. The President shall be responsible for giving a report of activities at each church business meeting.

**ARTICLE XI. ADVISORY COUNCIL.**

There shall be an Advisory Council consisting of the senior pastor, moderator, clerk, treasurer, financial secretary, missionary treasurer, chairman of the following boards: trustees, deacons, mission and Christian education; president of the American Baptist Women's Ministries, , and the chairman of the music committee. All matters of importance should be considered by the council before being presented to the church. It shall appoint all standing committees. It shall seek to coordinate the activities of the church. It shall make recommendations on financial affairs to the budget committee. It shall hold meetings in the month following the close of each quarter (January, April, July, October) at least 10 days before the church quarterly business meeting. Special meetings may be called by the moderator.

## **ARTICLE XII. ELECTIONS.**

### **Section 1. Time.**

The election of the church officers shall be by ballot and/or congregation approval by show of hands in November. Deviations, if necessary, shall be with the approval of the Advisory Council.

### **Section 2. Qualifications of Voters.**

All matters pertaining to the purchase, sale or mortgaging of property shall be voted on by active members who are of legal age (18 years or older). On all other matters, all active members are entitled to vote.

### **Section 3. Procedure.**

At least two weeks before the election of church officers, the nominating committee shall present to the church the names of one or more persons for each office to be filled. At the time of the election, it shall be the privilege of any member present and qualified to vote to place in nomination the name of any eligible person for any office, if the person agrees to serve if elected.

### **Section 4. Vacancies.**

Vacancies occurring during the year may be filled for the unexpired term at any business meeting. The nominating committee shall present nominees to the church for the vacancies to be filled.

## **ARTICLE XIII. MEETINGS.**

### **Section 1. Worship Services.**

Public services shall be held on each Lord's Day and other special occasions as approved by the Board of Deacons and/or the church. The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated on the first Sunday of each calendar quarter or as designated by the Pastor and the Board of Deacons.

### **Section 2. Educational Services.**

The Sunday School shall hold meetings each Lord's Day and any special occasions as approved by the Board of Christian Education.

### **Section 3. Business Meetings.**

Quarterly Business Meetings shall be held during the second half of each month of January, April, July, and October. Deviations from this time may be made with the approval of the Advisory Council. The annual meeting shall be the January meeting. Annual reports of individual officers, boards and committees of the church, and auxiliary organizations shall be given at this meeting. The regular business of the church shall be conducted at these meetings. A quorum for the transaction of business shall be ten percent (10%) of the active list. All written reports shall be given to the Church Clerk prior to

the Advisory Council meeting. These reports will be available at the business meeting and distributed electronically prior to the meeting.

Special business meetings may be called by the moderator or the Advisory Council. Notice of such meetings and the subject for which they are called shall be given at least one week in advance of the date of the meeting. At any of the regular meetings of worship, however, the church may, without notice, act upon the reception of members. Ordinary business shall not be conducted at worship services except in emergencies.

#### **ARTICLE XIV. CHURCH YEAR.**

The fiscal year of the church shall be the calendar year.

#### **ARTICLE XV. MEMORIAL GIFTS.**

It shall be the policy of the church, upon receipt of memorial gifts, to authorize the Church Clerk to send letters of acknowledgment and thanks on behalf of the church membership to the persons involved in making the donations.

Anyone wishing to donate a specific item to the church should contact the Board of Trustees to see if the item would be usable and in keeping with the future plans of the church facilities.

Some gifts may be given to fund a project, activity, or program. It should be understood by the donor(s) that a project must have the approval of the Trustees and the church body, and that all necessary funds be assured before the project may be started.

If adequate funds are not forthcoming for a project, the Trustees will review the project within a 12-month period and make their recommendation to either continue the project or to redesignate the funds.

All designated gifts for activities or programs are to be used as designated. In the event the gifts cannot be used as designated, then the donor or available family member, is to be contacted for instructions. If no family member is available, then the designated donation is to be placed in the church general fund.

The Trustees, being aware of church needs and the future plans for church facilities, should be ready to offer suggestions to prospective donors who do not have specific items in mind.

Any undesignated funds given to the church in memory of an individual shall be placed in the church general fund.

If possible and desired, an appropriate inscription shall be placed on the item donated. The Financial Secretary shall issue a receipt for the value of the gift to the donor, if desired.

**ARTICLE XVI. AMENDMENTS.**

Proposals for amendments to the constitution may be made in writing by any active church member and given to the Advisory Council for consideration. The constitution may be amended at any regular or special business meeting, where notice of such amendment, stating the proposed change, shall have been made by First Class mail at least one week in advance to all active church families. The Advisory Council shall then submit the proposed amendment to the church with a recommendation for adoption or rejection. A two-thirds (2/3) majority of those present and voting shall be required for adoption or rejection.

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Original Constitution accepted as amended July 15, 1970.

Revision 1 accepted: July 28, 1996.

Revision 2 accepted: \_\_\_\_\_

Constitution Revision 1 Committee: Paul Martin, Chr., Rev. Sam Davis, Barbara Griest, Betty Coburn, Carolyn Rader, Randy Scott, Ken Sigler and Rick Rhodeback.

Constitution Revision 2 Committee: Bob Suver (Chr), Pastor Eric Swenson, Don Rutledge, Elaine Scott, Greg Martin, Patti Oakes, Nancy Shoopman, Jennie Hardacre, and Sarah Sarrazine.