

CONSTITUTION

_____ Baptist Church

Street Address

City, GA Zip Code

PREAMBLE

To preserve the liberties of each individual member of this sovereign and democratic congregation, to reaffirm the principles of faith on which this church was founded, to provide for the conduct of this body in an orderly manner, and to safeguard the freedom of action of this church in relation to other churches and ecclesiastical bodies, the congregation of _____ Baptist Church does hereby establish this constitution. Under the lordship of Jesus Christ, _____ Baptist Church retains unto itself all rights of exclusive self-government in all areas of spiritual and temporal life.

ARTICLE I

NAME OF BODY

This body shall be known as _____ Baptist Church, Street Address, City, Georgia Zip Code, located in the state of Georgia and county of _____.

ARTICLE II

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

This body, incorporated as _____ Baptist Church, shall renew its Articles of Incorporation with the state of Georgia as often as necessary to ensure that said incorporation remains current. The officers of said corporation shall be the trustees of _____ Baptist Church.

ARTICLE III

PURPOSE OF BODY

Section 1. The _____ Baptist Church is a body of believers, joined together in a fellowship under the authority of God the Father, the lordship of Jesus Christ, and the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Section 2. The membership of _____ Baptist Church believes that the church derives its purpose from

- (a) The Great Commandment (“*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment: And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*” – Matthew 22:37-39, KJV), and

- (b) The Great Commission (“*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...*” – Matthew 28:19-20a, KJV).

Section 3. The members of _____ Baptist Church commit themselves to the following purposes:

1. **To worship** God in diverse ways which honor Him and inspire people.
2. **To minister** to people outside the church in a true spirit of servant hood.
3. **To witness** to lost people all over the world and present the saving message of Jesus Christ through word and deed.
4. **To fellowship** with and minister to one another in a spirit of unity and Christ-likeness.
5. **To teach, nurture, and encourage** believers in their pursuit of the full lordship of Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE IV CONFESSION OF FAITH

1. *The Scripture.* The Scriptures of the Old Testament and New Testament were given by inspiration of God and constitute the only sufficient, certain, and authoritative standard by which all human conduct, beliefs, and religious opinions are to be measured. The criterion by which the Scriptures are to be interpreted under the leadership of the Holy Spirit is Jesus Christ. The Bible, as the inspired record of the life and teachings of Christ, who is the revelation of God’s will and way, is the authoritative rule of practice for the church.
2. *Authority.* There is only one true and living God, revealed to us as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. To the church, the ultimate source of authority is Jesus Christ the Lord, and every area of life is to be subject to His Lordship. The Holy Spirit is God actively revealing Himself and His will to mankind; He interprets and confirms the voice of divine authority.
3. *The Individual.* Every individual is created in the image of God and is a person for whom Jesus died. Therefore, every individual merits Christian love, respect, and consideration as a person of infinite dignity and worth. All believers are urged to respect the sanctity of all God-given life. Each person is competent under God to make his or her own moral and religious decisions and is responsible to God in all matters of moral and religious duty. Every person is free under God in all matters of conscience and has freedom of choice regarding personal faith and the right to witness publicly about his or her religious beliefs, always with proper regard for the rights of other persons. The individual’s worth, needs, moral freedom, and potential for Christ have primary consideration in the life and work of the church.
4. *Salvation.* Salvation from sin is the free gift of God through the atoning death of Jesus Christ, conditioned only upon the belief in and commitment to Christ as Lord. The only

means of salvation is by grace through faith in the atonement and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Nothing can separate true believers from the love of God, but they will be kept through their faith and by His power unto eternal life.

5. *The Demands of Discipleship.* The demands of Christian discipleship, based on the recognition of the lordship of Christ, relate to the whole of life and call for full obedience and complete devotion. The development of Christian family life – including marriage as the union of one man and one woman – is a primary concern of all believers. The Christian is a citizen of both the kingdom of God and the state and is responsible for obedience to the law of the land, as well as the higher law of God. Christians are obligated to serve God with their testimony, time, talents, tithes and offerings and should recognize that all these are entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others.
6. *The Priesthood of All Believers.* Each Christian, having direct access to God through Christ, is his or her own priest and needs no intermediary. All souls have an equal right to direct access to God and thereby have equal responsibilities to each other before God.
7. *The Nature of the Church.* The church universal is the fellowship of all persons redeemed by Christ and made one in the family of God. The local church is a fellowship of baptized believers, voluntarily banded together for worship, ministry, witness, fellowship, and nurture. Membership in the church is a privilege and responsibility properly extended only to regenerated persons who voluntarily accept baptism and commit themselves to faithful discipleship in the body of Christ. The church is an autonomous body, subject only to Christ, its head. Its democratic government properly reflects the equality and responsibility of believers under the lordship of Christ. Both church and state are ordained of God and are answerable to Him. They should remain separate, but they are under the obligation of mutual recognition and reinforcement as each seeks to fulfill its divine function. The church is to be responsible in the world, but its character and ministry are not to be of the world.
8. *Ordinances of the Church.* Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two ordinances of the church. New Testament baptism is symbolic of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and is administered only by the immersion of believers in water in the name of Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Baptism is not a condition of salvation or the remission of sin, but it is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the death of the believer to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. Baptism also symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of the physical body. Baptism is the means by which believers identify and unite with the church as God's people in the world. It acknowledges the believer's acceptance of both the privileges and responsibilities of membership in the church as the body of Christ. The only persons who qualify for baptism are those who have received the gospel, have personally accepted its truth concerning Jesus Christ, and, through an intentional and decisive act, have received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Acceptance of baptism from another church is determined by the meaning, the moment, and the mode of baptism in the other church's practice, not by

denominational affiliation. Biblical or believer's baptism, as taught in Scripture, is both an ordinance of this church and a personal act in which the recipient acknowledges faith in and obedience to Jesus Christ under the authority of the New Testament church.

The Lord's Supper is symbolic of the body and blood of Christ which accomplished His work of redemption. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby baptized believers, through partaking of the bread and fruit of the vine, commemorate the death of Jesus Christ and anticipate His second coming. Believers according to the teachings of the New Testament are eligible to take the Lord's Supper.

9. *The Lord's Day.* Sunday, the first day of the week, is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution ordained of God commemorating the resurrection of Christ from the dead and challenging believers to observe a day of rest characterized by activities commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the lordship of Jesus Christ.
10. *The Church's Continuing Task.* (a) *Worship* – an experience of communion with the living and holy God – calls for an emphasis on reverence and orderliness, on confession and humility, and an awareness of the holiness and majesty and grace and purpose of God, who is revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (b) Every Christian's responsibility is *ministry and service*, but God, in His wisdom, calls some believers in a unique way to dedicate their lives to full-time, church-related ministry. (c) *Evangelism*, which is primary in the mission of the church and the vocation of every Christian, is the proclamation of God's judgment and grace in Jesus Christ and the call to accept and follow Him as Lord. (d) *Missions* seek the extension of God's redemptive purpose in all the world through evangelism, education, and Christian service and call for the utmost dedication on the part of Christians to this task. (e) Christian *stewardship* conceives the whole life as a sacred trust from God and requires the responsible use of life, time, talents, and substance in the service of God. (f) Christian *education* grows out of the relation of faith and reason and calls for academic excellence and freedom that are both real and responsible. The nature of Christian faith and Christian experience and the nature and needs of persons make teaching and training imperative.
11. *Social Responsibilities.* The Christian is a citizen of both the kingdom of God and the state and, therefore, has dual responsibilities. Every Christian is obligated to use any means available, under the leadership of Jesus Christ, to improve society and establish righteousness among people. Every Christian should seek to bring the whole of society under the influence of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love, as taught by the Lord Jesus Christ. In order to promote these ends, Christians should work with all people of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.
12. *Religious Liberty.* Religious freedom is the foundation of all true freedom and is rooted in the nature of God, the nature of humanity, and the lordship of Jesus Christ. Religious liberty is ordained of God and denotes the fact that every person possesses a will with the freedom of choice to make his or her own decisions about worship, as dictated by his or her conscience. Church and state should be separate but mutually related in the normal

affairs of life. Neither church nor state should exercise authority over the other. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, implying the right of free unhindered access to God on the part of all men and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

13. *Last Things.* God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. Jesus Christ will return to the earth visibly in glory; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all people in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in heaven with the Lord.

ARTICLE V COVENANT

We, the members of _____ Baptist Church, having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, as our Savior, and do the profession of our faith, having been baptized by immersion in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, do now, in the presence of God and this assembly, enter into agreement with one another, as one body in Christ. Therefore, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit and with the Bible, the inspired Word of God, as our guide, we hereby covenant together as follows:

1. To walk together in Christian love.
2. To strive for the advancement of this church.
3. To promote Christian spirituality.
4. To sustain the worship, discipline, and doctrinal integrity of this church.
5. To observe the church's ordinances of believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper as authorized by this church.
6. To contribute cheerfully and regularly of God's tithes and our offerings to the support of the ministry of this church and to the spread of the gospel to all nations.
7. To encourage personal and family devotions.
8. To educate our children according to our faith.
9. To seek the salvation of unbelievers.
10. To be just in our dealings and reliable in our responsibilities and to be an example of Christian living to those around us.
11. To recognize that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit and to guard against the abuse of substances and the practice of habits harmful to our bodies.
12. To preserve and strengthen our Christian witness to the world by using our influence to combat harmful practices in society.
13. To work unfailingly for the advancement of the kingdom of the Savior by witnessing in words as well as in conduct.
14. To walk in Christian harmony and watchfulness, giving and receiving assistance with meekness and affection.
15. To pray for one another and help one another in sickness and in sorrow.

16. To be slow to anger and to be always open and eager for reconciliation, seeking it without delay.
17. To agree that, if we move from this area, we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

ARTICLE VI POLITY AND AFFILIATIONS

_____ Baptist Church exists under the lordship of Jesus Christ, who is the head of the church, as He reveals His leadership through the Word of God and through the Holy Spirit. This church is subject to no other ecclesiastical body. The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. _____ Baptist Church recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation that are common among Southern Baptist churches. Insofar as is practical and desirable, this church shall cooperate with and support the _____ Baptist Association, the Baptist Convention of the State of Georgia, and the Southern Baptist Convention and shall evidence a spirit of cooperation and understanding in its actions and attitudes toward Christians of all denominations.

ARTICLE VII ADOPTION

Section 1. This constitution shall be formally presented to the church, and, in a business meeting not less than fourteen (14) days nor more than thirty (30) days following the presentation, the vote on adoption of the constitution shall be taken. This constitution shall be considered adopted and in immediate effect if and when two-thirds of the members present and voting in the business session in which the vote on adoption is taken shall vote in favor of adoption.

Section 2. After adoption, this constitution shall abolish, supersede, and replace any constitution that preceded it.

Section 3. A copy of this constitution shall be kept in the church office. All amendments and revisions to this constitution, after adoption by vote of the body, shall be prepared by the church clerk and incorporated into the constitution. The constitution and all amendments and revisions thereof shall be made available to church members upon request.

ARTICLE VIII AMENDMENTS

Section 1. Amendments to this constitution shall be made by the following procedure:

- (a) Any member of the church shall have the right to submit in writing a request for an amendment to this constitution during a church business meeting. The request for amendment shall be referred automatically to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee for

study. The Constitution and Bylaws Committee shall bring its report concerning the request for amendment to the next regularly-scheduled business meeting.

- (b) If the Constitution and Bylaws Committee recommends the amendment, the committee shall present the proposed amendment to the church body in writing during a business meeting.
- (c) The text of the proposed amendment shall be published at least twice in the church's newsletter prior to being voted upon.
- (d) Copies of the proposed amendment shall be made available to all church members attending the business meeting at which the amendment is voted upon.
- (e) A vote on adopting the amendment shall be taken in a business meeting not less than fourteen (14) days or more than thirty (30) days after formal presentation of the amendment to the church body by the Constitution and Bylaws Committee.

Section 2. An amendment shall be adopted if it receives a two-thirds vote of all members of the church present and voting in the business session at which the vote on the amendment is taken. Upon adoption, the amendment shall become effective immediately.

CONSTITUTION ADOPTED IN CALLED BUSINESS MEETING ON MARCH 25, 2001.