

# CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

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Bethel Baptist Church

Lawton, Oklahoma

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Bethel Baptist Church of Lawton, Oklahoma is a non-profit, charitable, church corporation without capital stock, incorporated under the laws of the State of Oklahoma.

## PROPERTY RIGHTS

The members of this church have no property rights in the asset of the church, and upon the termination of their membership by any means, they shall be entitled to no interest in the assets and property of the church. In the event of the termination and dissolution of the corporation, the assets and property of the church shall be distributed according to the vote of the majority of the members of the Bethel Baptist Church, Lawton, Oklahoma.

Whereas the buildings, furniture and equipment of Bethel Baptist Church were built and/or paid for, and the liquid assets donated, by the people who held to the articles of faith set forth herein, and for the purpose of perpetuating the faith and practices described in those articles of faith, it seems proper that we should do all that is necessary to retain the property and assets for use by people of like faith and order.

Therefore, this church's buildings, their contents, and other assets are intended to perpetually be the property of a Baptist Church, of the above stated faith and order, unless and until such a Baptist congregation, rightly owning said property, should sell it to another group or individual. It is our determination that this property shall not become the property of another kind of church, through the evolution of teachings and practices.

## Possible Disbandment

In the event that this church should, for any reason, ever be dissolved or disbanded, the remaining members, or their assigns or representatives, shall never be allowed to receive or retain the assets of this property for personal gain. The property shall be sold by the members that remain, who hold to the above described faith and practice, and the proceeds of such sale shall first be used to pay any legal debts the church may have. The remaining members, or responsible parties, shall then donate the total remnant of assets to mission work, through the ministry of another church, or churches, of like faith and order. Such church, or churches, shall be chosen by the vote of the remaining active members of this church, or responsible parties acting for them, but such choice is to be restricted to a church, or churches, of like faith and order.

# CONSTITUTION

## ARTICLE I

### **Name**

The name of this organization shall be **Bethel Baptist Church**.

## ARTICLE II

### **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 the Son, and the Holy Ghost, we do now in the presence of God, angels 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 comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the Church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; 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 and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the cause of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember reach other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

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

## ARTICLE III

### **Doctrine**

We accept the Scriptures as our authority, matters of faith and practice, and use the New Hampshire Confession of Faith as our interpretation of Bible doctrine.

## **ARTICLE IV**

### **Membership**

*Section 1.* Any person may be received by baptism on professing saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Section 2.* Persons may be received on their Christian experience providing they have been baptized according to the doctrines of this church.

*Section 3.* Persons may be received into the membership of this church, by letter of recommendation from sister churches of like faith and order.

*Section 4.* Membership in this church may be dissolved by letter of dismissal to sister Baptist churches or by death. However, any member whose conduct is such that it brings reproach against the cause of Christ, the church or its offices, may be disciplined the scriptural way by withdrawing fellowship. Such action will be governed by the scriptural steps and will be in effect until such party (or parties) makes the required adjustment.

## **ARTICLE V**

### **Duties of Members**

It is required that every member of Bethel Baptist Church faithfully attend the worship services of Bethel Baptist Church. If any member, without reasonable excuse, fails to attend the regular worship services of Bethel Baptist Church, for a period of 13 weeks, or more, such member shall automatically be placed in the disciplined members file. All persons who are disciplined for non-attendance shall have no membership rights or standing, no voice or vote in the church, no rights to communion in the church, and such persons shall in no wise be granted letters until they return and make proper apology, and/or restitution, and have received forgiveness from, and reinstatement by, Bethel Baptist Church. It shall be each member's responsibility to communicate with the church and make the reason for absence known, and to show that it is a reasonable cause.

## **ARTICLE VI**

### **Officers**

#### ***Section 1. Pastor***

**A.** The pastor shall be called by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present at a meeting called for this purpose and announced in the church services the Sunday previous. He shall serve for an indefinite period of time, not to be elected annually as other officers of the church (since this is the scriptural way).

**B.** A pastor shall be dismissed only when he fails to perform his duties, or lives in an ungodly manner, or practices that which does not become a Christian minister. When dismissal of a pastor becomes necessary, it shall be done decently, openly, and after the following order:

1. He shall be admonished and the grievances clearly stated to him by a group of not less than three men consisting of, or appointed by, the officers of the church.

2. If he will not be admonished, or if the problem cannot be resolved, then a special business meeting shall be called before the membership body of the church for the stated purpose of considering the dismissal of the pastor. The meeting shall be announced at least one Sunday prior to its occurrence. The pastor shall, in no wise, hinder the calling or publicizing of this meeting.

3. In the meeting, the charges shall be specifically declared and shall be established by two or more witnesses (*I Timothy 5:19*). The pastor shall then, at his option, be given opportunity to answer the charges against him. If the problem cannot be resolved, a motion should then be made to declare the pulpit vacant. The motion must be seconded and carried by a two-thirds majority of the members present. Any one who has been a member for as long as six months, but who has not been **active** for the six months preceding the meeting **shall be ineligible** to vote in such a meeting.

**C.** In case of the death, resignation or dismissal of a pastor, a pulpit committee shall be selected by the church to search out possible candidates for the position. In cases where the pastor resigns of his own will, he should, with the church's consent assist the pulpit committee in finding candidates who shall be asked to come and preach for the congregation. One or more preachers may be submitted to the church for vote, but when more than one is considered, the one with the fewest votes shall be eliminated, and the remaining ones shall be voted on until only one is left. This one shall then be voted on, "yes" or "no," and must receive a two-thirds "yes" vote to be called. All voting on pastors shall be done by secret ballot. The same eligibility qualifications shall be placed on inactive members in voting to call a pastor as in dismissing one. (See paragraph B.)

### Section 2. Deacons

As the number increases and the need arises, deacons shall be elected to assist the pastor in the work of the material ministry (*Acts 6:1–3*). Since the office of a deacon is that of a servant, and not one of authority, there shall never be a board of deacons independently rendering decisions which will affect the membership of the church. The deacons shall labor in subordinate services appointed to them by the pastor (*Acts 6:3*). They shall be as many in number as the pastor deems necessary. The nature of a deacon's service demands that he be selected by the local church in which he serves. Therefore, men joining this church by letter who were deacons in other churches shall not be considered deacons in this church unless duly selected as such. A man must serve as a faithful member of Bethel Baptist Church for one year before he is eligible to be elected as a deacon.

There is a sense in which all officers of the church serve in the capacity of a deacon (servant). therefore, each officer of the church should strive to conduct himself according to the standards of **I Timothy 3:8–13**.

*Section 3.* A board of as many as five **Trustees**.

*Section 4.* A **Board of Finance** consisting of the treasurer, financial secretary and the board of trustees.

*Section 5.* A **Clerk**.

*Section 6.* A **Financial Secretary** (helper to the treasurer).

*Section 7.* A **Treasurer**.

*Section 8.* A **Recording Secretary** and an assistant, one of which shall be a man.

## ARTICLE VII

### **Election of Officers**

The election of officers shall be held before the membership body of the church at the annual business meeting. All officers shall be nominated from the floor or by a nominating committee as the pastor deems expedient. Any officer nominated for election shall be subject to the approval of the pastor.

*Section 1.* The committeemen or deacons shall be elected by the church for a term of one year, and may be re-elected each year so long as they fulfill their office in a manner which is godly and satisfactory to the church.

*Section 2.* The trustees shall be elected by the church for a term of one year, and may be re-elected each year so long as they live in a godly fashion and take care of the business of their office satisfactorily. One of the five shall be elected as chairman, and one as secretary.

*Section 3.* All other officers, except the pastor, shall be elected by the membership body of the church for a period of one year.

*Section 4.* Vacancies in offices may be filled at any time of regular business meeting during the year.

*Section 5.* All Sunday School teachers and workers and all musicians shall be appointed by the pastor.

## **ARTICLE VIII**

### **Committees**

*Section 1.* There shall be an advisory committee which shall consist of the pastor and at least two-thirds of the elected officers of the church.

*Section 2.* When deemed necessary by the pastor, a nominating committee of five members shall be appointed by the pastor at least thirty days before the annual election.

*Section 3.* When the need arises, a pulpit committee of five men shall be elected by the church. These shall be men of good character, spiritual discernment and of good standing in the church.

## **ARTICLE IX**

### **Subordinate Organizations**

*Section 1.* The church shall have the power of general oversight and control of all subordinate organizations.

*Section 2.* The head of any such organization shall submit a written report to the church upon request.

*Section 3.* The head of any such organization must be a member of this church and in good standing.

*Section 4.* Any subordinate organization desiring the use of the church property for any purpose must have the approval of the pastor and/or the officers of the church.

*Section 5.* Outside organizations or individuals who are not affiliated with the church shall not be extended the privilege of the personal use of church property.

*Section 6.* All subordinate organizations shall disburse their funds with the supervision of the pastor and treasury officers of the church.

## **ARTICLE X**

### **Amendments**

*Section 1.* This constitution may be amended or revised by a two-thirds vote of the members present at any annual business meeting.

*Section 2.* The by-laws appended may be amended or revised by a two-thirds vote of the members present at any annual business meeting.

## THE BY-LAWS

### ARTICLE I

#### Duties of Officers

**Qualifications:** Qualification of officers shall meet the standards upheld by the Bible and recorded primarily in **I Timothy 3** and must at all times recognize the authority of the pastor as set forth in God's Word as being the under-shepherd of Christ.

Any officer of the church who refuses or willfully and knowingly neglects to be faithful in regular worship services and in the performance of his duties, or to attend any stated and announced special business meeting shall automatically forfeit his office, and the church shall call a special business meeting to replace him.

*Section 1.* The pastor shall have charge of the spiritual welfare of the congregation. He shall act as moderator in the business meetings of the church. He shall be an ex-officio member of all boards and all committees and may call any board or committee together at any time. He may call the church together for special business. He shall have the authority to purchase supplies necessary to his work.

*Section 2.* In the absence of the pastor, no meeting shall be considered legal, except with the pastor's approval, or when the pulpit is vacant, or when the pastor refuses deliberately to be present.

*Section 3.* It is the duty of the committeemen or deacons to visit the sick; to prepare and distribute the elements of the Lord's Supper; to cooperate with and assist the pastor in the performance of his duties. They shall assist the pastor, as he may require, in all devotional services. The qualifications of the deacons and their wives are those found in **I Timothy 3:8-13**.

*Section 4.* The duties of the trustees shall be to serve the church in legal matters concerning church property. They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer any such property without the specific vote of the church authorizing such action.

*Section 5.* The board of finance shall meet when necessary to discuss plans and ways whereby to finance the church and to bring reports or recommendations to the church body as they deem necessary.

*Section 6.* The clerk shall issue letters of recommendation received from sister church, and shall maintain an up-to-date file of church membership.

*Section 7.* The financial secretary shall assist the treasurer in receiving and disbursing all contributions to the church. He shall keep record of all contributions and pledges, and issue receipts annually.

He shall share co-responsibility with the treasurer in disbursing church funds.

*Section 8.* The treasurer and the financial secretary shall receive for deposit all money of the church not otherwise directed. All funds shall remain at the church in a designated place until removed for deposit at the bank. All counting and disbursing of funds shall take place at the church. He shall disburse funds only as authorized by the church. A monthly financial statement shall be prepared and displayed for inspection by the church.

*Section 9.* The Sunday School superintendent shall have general control of the Sunday School in conjunction with and under the advice of the pastor.

*Section 10.* The music director and associate music director shall perform the regular duties of that office, and arrange that one or the other is present at each service.

*Section 11.* The pianist and organist shall perform the regular duties of that office, and arrange that one or the other is present at each service.

*Section 12.* The head usher and the associate head usher shall be responsible for the seating of the congregation and the collection of offerings in all regular services. They have power to recruit assistance as is necessary from the duly elected ushers or from the congregation at large in their absence. They shall be responsible for maintaining good order on the premises at all times.

*Section 13.* The recording secretary and/or the assistant recording secretary shall witness and record the proceedings of all regular and special business meetings of the church. They shall prepare a type-written record of such proceedings and enter them into the permanent records of the church. One of these shall be a man, designated to be present at all special business meetings and men's business meetings of the church.

## **ARTICLE II**

### **Services**

The regular meeting of the church for worship shall be as follows:

*Section 1.* Sunday School, Morning Worship, Training Union, Evening Worship, Midweek Service. Communion shall be held at least once a year, and as the pastor shall feel led of the Lord.

*Section 2.* Business meetings shall be held as follows: The annual business meeting of the church shall be held the first convenient Wednesday night of the year. Special business meetings not otherwise provided for may be called by the pastor as he deems necessary.

### **ARTICLE III**

#### **Duties of Committees**

*Section 1.* The advisory committee shall meet and consider questions of the church and its welfare as the pastor may deem necessary. They shall have no executive power except as may be particularly specified to them by the church.

*Section 2.* When the pastor deems a nominating committee necessary, said committee shall, at the annual election, submit names for the various offices coming vacant.

*Section 3.* It shall not be the policy of this church, or any subordinate organization thereof, to promote suppers, parties, or any other project for raising funds.

### **ARTICLE IV**

#### **Discipline Committee**

This committee shall consist of all the officers of the church; the pastor, the deacons, the trustees, the Sunday School superintendent, the church treasurer, the recording secretary and the music director. All grievances that may arise shall be heard in front of this group (being a Christian group) and shall be determined and finally disposed of by this group. There shall not be at any time an open church trial. (For there always unsaved people in the congregation, and it would cause them to lose faith in God.) therefore, all persons with an grievance must appear before this committee to be heard, and the committee shall dispose of the matter as they deem necessary. these grievances must always be presented to the pastor in writing and signed by the offended party.