



Constitution & Covenant

Revised March 7, 2004

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH

PREAMBLE

So that things may be done decently and in order, and that we may more readily help each other in our Christian service, we declare and establish this constitution to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

ARTICLE I NAME

Section I. Church Name

The official name of this church is the Bethel Baptist Church of Oneida County, NY. On March 1, 1981, it was voted by the congregation that this church would be a Baptist church after having been an independent, non-denominational* church since June 1977.

Section II. Associations

This church shall be an independent, autonomous church, subject only to Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. It has the right to cooperate and associate with other Biblical groups on a voluntary basis. There shall be no cooperation with any group that permits the presence of apostates or apostasy.

This church shall fellowship with the Conservative Baptist churches of America and sister organizations as long as these associations are characterized by Biblical convictions and vigorous opposition to apostasy and compromise. If any of these associations forsakes their present Biblical position, this church shall take appropriate action to withdraw from its fellowship.

ARTICLE II PURPOSE

Section I. Church Purpose

The purpose of the church is to exalt Jesus Christ as the crucified and risen Son of God; to maintain public worship services; to administer the ordinances*; to strengthen Christians in the faith through the teachings of the Bible and Christian fellowship; to seek the salvation of lost souls; and to help proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world. The Holy Bible is the basis and foundation of our faith and practice.

This congregation is organized as a church exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Revenue Law), including, but not limited to, for such purposes, the establishing and maintaining of religious worship, the building, maintaining and operating of churches, parsonages, schools, and any other ministries that the church may be led of God to establish.

Section II. Church Covenant

The following church covenant may be read preceding the partaking of the Lord's Supper and at any other time deemed appropriate by the pastor and board of deacons. (Caution should be taken not to let this become a meaningless repetition and should be read totally voluntarily. (Ecc. 5:4-6) It may be read in a responsive manner as follows:

Minister: By what common and gracious experience do we enter into spiritual fellowship and covenant relations with God and with one another?

Congregation: 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 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.

Minister: What is the great bond of our union with God and each other?

Congregation: We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love.

Minister: What are our great privileges and duties in this our own church?

Congregation: To strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinance, discipline and doctrines; to give this church a sacred preeminence over all institutions of human or secular origin.

Minister: What vows do we gladly make as stewards of that which God has entrusted to us?

Congregation: To contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the

expense of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel to all nations.

Minister: For the sake of our homes and our loved ones, what gracious tasks do we humbly assume?

Congregation: We also engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to instruct our children in the Scriptures; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances.

Minister: For the sake of the unsaved for whom our Savior died, to what manner of life and conversation are we solemnly and sincerely pledged?

Congregation: 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, back-biting, and excessive anger, and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Savior.

Minister: Since Christ is our Lord, and we are all brethren, by what ministries are we to strengthen each other and thereby adorn the teachings of our Lord and Savior?

Congregation: We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each 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 teachings of our Savior, to seek it without delay.

Minister-Congregation: O God, humbly confessing our past sins, we pray for grace and strength to keep this our Covenant, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ARTICLE III ARTICLES OF FAITH

The Articles of Faith* are the basis for this church's unity of belief. They allow us to maintain a standard of Biblical truth, oneness of spirit, and unity in purpose as we seek to do His will through different church activities.

Section I. The Holy Scriptures

We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the inspired Word of God. The Scriptures are inerrant, infallible and God-breathed, and therefore are the final authority for faith and life. The sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament are the complete and divine revelation of God to Man. (II Tim 3:16-17; II Pet 1:20-21; Rev 22: 18-19)

Section II. The Godhead

We believe the Scriptures teach there is one and only one living and Triune God who is a spirit; that He is greater than the sum total of all that which He has created; is worthy of all possible honor, confidence and love; and that He exists in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the divine relationship which is the Godhead: equal in every divine perfection and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption. (Ps 145:3; 104:4; 8:3; 83:18; John 4:24; 1:1-14; Mark 12:30; Jer. 10:10; Gen 1:1; Col 2:9; Luke 3:22; II Cor. 13:14)

Section III. God the Father

We believe the Father is God and is called Father because of His relationship to the Son Jesus Christ and that we may call Him Father because of the finished work of Christ at Calvary making it possible for sinners to be adopted into the family of God. (John 1:12; 8:18; 5:18; Rom 1:7; 8:14-17; Gal 4:7)

Section IV. God the Son

We believe the Son, Jesus Christ, though having always existed, was begotten of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, is true God, true man, and is the one and all sufficient Savior of man, sitting at the right hand of the Father, mediating for the believer. (I Tim 2:5; I John 2:1; Heb. 1:8; 7:25; Matt 27:54)

Section V. God the Holy Spirit

We believe in the person of the Holy Spirit who convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He regenerates, sanctifies, and comforts those who believe in Jesus Christ. He also empowers believers to carry out the great commission. Believers receive the Holy Spirit upon their acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of Christ. (John 16:7-11; Matt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Eph. 1:13)

We believe that the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues and the gift of healing, were temporary. We believe that speaking in tongues was never the common or necessary sign of the baptism or filling of the Holy Spirit and that ultimate deliverance of the body from sickness or death awaits the consummation of our salvation in the resurrection, though God frequently chooses to answer the prayers of believers for physical healing. (I Cor. 1:22; 13:8; 14:21-22)

Section VI. The Sin Nature of Man

We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God, but that in Adam's sin the human race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God; and, that man is totally sinful and, of himself, utterly unable to remedy his lost condition. (Gen 1:26-27; Rom 3:22-23; 5:12; 6:23; Eph. 2:1-3; Eph. 4:17-19)

Section VII. Christ's Redemptive Work

We believe in the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ for our sins; the resurrection of His body; His ascension into heaven; and His personal, visible return to earth. (Rom 5:8; Acts 1:9-11; I Cor. 15:20)

Section VIII. Salvation

We believe that salvation is the gift of God and is received and experienced only by personal faith in Jesus Christ. We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever through the testimony of God's Word, which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for fulfilling our fleshly sins that are repulsive to God. (Eph. 2:8-9; Acts 2:38; 8:36-39; John 20:31; 10:27-30; 6:37-40; Rom 8:1,38-39; 10:13; 13:13-14; I Cor. 1:4-8; I Pet 1:4-5; Gal 5:13)

Section IX. Satan

We believe that Satan is the great tempter of men, the enemy of God, the accuser of the saints, and that he will eventually be defeated by Christ and sentenced to the Lake of Fire forever. (Matt 4:3; 13:39; Acts 13:10; Rev 12:9-10; 19:20; 20:10; I Pet 5:8; I John 4:3; II Cor. 11:13-15; Job 1:6-7)

Section X. Christ's Second Coming

We believe in the rapture of the saints, the great Tribulation Period, the glorious return of Jesus Christ with the saints to rule and to reign for 1000 years with the judgment of the wicked to follow. (Matt 24:21; 24:29-30; 25:31-46; Rev 20:12-15; I Thess. 4:14-18)

Section XI. The Purity of the Church

We believe that followers of Christ are ever in a battle between good and evil because of our two natures. Therefore, if a member, or one who regularly fellowships with the church, blatantly practices unchristian-like behavior, it is the duty of the church

to quickly restore purity to our church by counsel, discipline, and/or removal of such a person.

We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality*, lesbianism*, bisexuality*, bestiality*, incest*, fornication*, adultery*, and pornography* are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. This also includes uncontrolled hatred, brutality, envy, murder, rape, idolatry, and any other behavior that would seriously shame our Lord and His church.

Any teachings that contradict our Articles of Faith would also violate the purity of this church. (Gen 2:24; 19:5; 26:8-9; Lev 18:1-30; Rom 1:26-32; I Cor. 5:1-5; 6:9-10; I Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4; Gal 5:19-21)

Section XII. Position of the Local Church

We believe that each local church has the right to be independent and autonomous and must be free from interference by any ecclesiastical* or political authority. We believe that God has ordained and created all authority consisting of three basic institutions: 1) the home, 2) the church, 3) the state. Every person is subject to these authorities, but all (including the authorities themselves) are answerable to God and governed by His Word. God has given each institution specific Biblical responsibilities and balanced those responsibilities with the understanding that no institution has the right to infringe upon the other. The home, the church, and the state are equal and sovereign in their respective Biblically assigned spheres of responsibility under God. (Acts 6:2-3; 4:18-20; Rom 13:1-7; Eph. 5:22-24; II Cor. 8:18-19; Heb. 13:17; I Pet 2:13-14)

Section XIII. Baptism

We believe that Christian Baptism is the immersion of a believer of Christ in water, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (Matt 3:13-17; 28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:36-39)

Section XIV. Authority of the Articles of Faith

The Articles of Faith do not exhaust the extent of our faith. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe. We do believe, however, that the foregoing Articles of Faith accurately represent the teaching of the Bible, and therefore, are binding upon all members.

ARTICLE IV. MEMBERSHIP

Section I. Requirements

A. The membership shall consist of (1) born again, (2) baptized believers in Christ who are (3) in full agreement with and understand the Articles of Faith, and (4) willingly subscribe to the Constitution of the church, (5) and shall sign a statement of agreement found at the end of this Constitution. Each prospective member shall receive a copy of this Constitution.

Section II. Methods of Becoming a Member and Steps to Follow

A. Methods

1. By baptism, following an individual's acceptance of Christ and confession of faith in Christ.

2. By Letter of Transfer from another church holding the same essential standards of faith and practice as this church.

3. By Statement of Faith and Experience, in the case of an individual who has been immersed and who has been a member of a church holding the same essential standards of faith and practice, but whom for some good reason is unable to obtain a letter of transfer from the former church.

4. By Restoration, following confession of sins for which he* was suspended and by giving evidence of a change in conduct. (Refer to Section VI for further procedure.)

B. Steps to Follow in Becoming a Member

1. Any believer in Christ who wishes to become a member of the church is invited to let his* desire be known to the pastor, the deacon board, or to any member of the church who in turn will introduce the applicant to the pastor or deacons. After an interview with the pastor, the applicant will receive a copy of the church constitution that he must read thoroughly.

2. All applicants for membership shall meet with the pastor and deacons, or a committee appointed by the deacons. In this meeting, each applicant shall tell about the way God has assured him of salvation.

3. If the applicant has not been immersed after he* has accepted Christ, the pastor and deacons will arrange for baptism of the applicant at an appropriate time.

4. All applicants for admission to membership shall be approved by the board of deacons before being presented to the church. The deacons shall recommend for membership only those who meet the requirements in Article IV, Section I.

5. After the board of deacons recommends applicants for membership, they must be approved for membership by a majority vote of the church members present at a regular church business meeting.

6. Right Hand of Fellowship: The pastor, on behalf of the church, shall publicly extend the Right Hand of Fellowship to new members at any Sunday service, unless otherwise directed by the board of deacons.

7. Any member having become a member under any false pretense shall lose his* membership through normal disciplinary action.

Section III. Letters of Transfer

Upon official, written request, any member in good standing may be granted a letter of transfer to unite with another specified church of like faith and practice provided the letter is recommended by the majority of the board of deacons and granted by a majority vote of the church members present at any church business meeting. These letters are granted only to churches and not to the member.

Section IV. Release of Members

A. Release to Different Type Church

If a member desires to unite with another church of a different faith and practice, he* may be granted release provided the letter is recommended by the majority of the board of deacons and granted by a majority vote of the church members at any church business meeting. This release shall take place preferably only after an attempt has been made with this person by the pastor and/or a deacon in order to point out the differences and the problems that can occur and encourage that person to join a church of like faith and practice.

B. Release by Request

The release of a member may also be granted upon a written request by that member to have his membership removed from the church roll. This too is granted only after the above mentioned procedure in item A. No letter of transfer will be granted in such cases.

C. Other Reasons

Release for other reasons is covered in the sections dealing with Discipline and Revision of Membership List.

Section V. Discipline (Rom 16:17-18)

It is vital to the testimony of this church and the glory of our Lord that the purity of the church be preserved and its peace protected. With these ends in view, it shall be the duty of the pastor and deacons to seek diligently to reclaim any member/ regular attendee known to be living in disregard of this church's Biblical and constitutional standards. It is specifically directed that the pastor and deacons move with promptness and vigor in dealing with anyone who is obstructing the work or disturbing the peace of the church by slander, falsehood, gossip, conspiracy, or other unfair and unchristian methods/behavior. It is recognized that a Baptist church must be a democracy in which the majority shall rule. It is recognized further that while an individual has the right to private opinion in all questions, he* shall not have the right to engage in secret or open propaganda, or of deliberately disturbing the peace and interrupting the work of the church. It is further recognized that when the church, by regular order and proper vote, has determined upon a course of action, that course becomes the duty of every member of the church. If any member cannot conscientiously follow the decision of the church, he* is to quietly and peacefully withdraw from the membership.

A. There shall be a discipline committee consisting of the pastor and the boards of deacons. These men shall have sole authority in determining heretical deviations from the statement of faith and violations of the church covenant. If the pastor or a deacon is the subject of a disciplinary matter, he shall not sit as a member of the discipline committee. He shall be entitled to the same steps as other church members and be subject to the same discipline.

B. Members are expected to demonstrate special loyalty and concern for one another. When a member becomes aware of an offense of such magnitude that it hinders spiritual growth and testimony, he* is to go alone to the offending party and seek to restore his brother*. Before he* goes, he* should first examine himself. When he* goes, he* should go with a spirit of humility and have the goal of restoration. (Matt 18:15-17)

C. If reconciliation is not reached, a second member, either a deacon or the pastor, is to accompany the one seeking to resolve the matter. This step should also be preceded by self-examination, and exercised in a spirit of humility with the goal of restoration. (Matt 18:15-17)

D. In order to prevent unnecessary public scandal, the pastor and deacons may hear the charges, pro and con, in any disciplinary case, if this is mutually satisfactory with the accused and the accuser. If excommunication* is recommended by the pastor and deacons, the recommendation must be presented to the church, preferably without details, for final action. The entire matter must be brought before the church at the accused's written and signed request, or the church's*. No member may be dismissed except by vote of the church. (I Cor. 5:13)

No non-member shall be permitted in such a church meeting (as witness, defense, or otherwise) without permission of a majority of the members present and voting.

E. If the matter is still unresolved after the steps outlined in subsections (B) and (C) have been taken, the discipline committee, as the church representatives biblically responsible for discipline shall hear the matter, and if the matter is still unresolved such members who refuse to repent and be restored are to be removed from the membership of the church upon a majority vote of the membership present at a meeting called for the purpose of considering disciplinary action. It is right and in harmony with the Scriptures for the congregation to exclude from the fellowship any individual who persistently holds false and heretical doctrine, or is unwilling to settle differences in a scriptural manner, or openly and persistently lives inconsistently with his Christian profession, lives in violation of the law or public morals, or persistently disturbs the peace and unity of this church. (I Cor. 5:13)

F. No matter may be heard by the discipline committee or the church unless the steps outlined in subsections (B) and (C) have been taken, except in the case of a serious public offense.

G. If an unrepentant offending party is removed from the church membership, all contact with him* from that point forward must be for the sake of restoration (except family members).

Section VI. Restoration

The church must restore to fellowship in full forgiveness those persons who show satisfactory evidence of repentance (II Cor. 2:6-8). Persons shall be restored at a duly called church business meeting upon recommendation of the deacons and a 2/3 majority of the members present and voting.

Section VII. Revision of Membership

During the last quarter of each year the church membership shall be reviewed by the pastor and board of deacons and, if necessary, a committee of up to three other persons appointed by the board to assist them. (Any final action will be dealt with by the pastor and board alone.)

Any member habitually absent from the services of the church without due cause or in any other way demonstrated a serious lack of interest in the spiritual things of this church shall be contacted by the pastor and board of deacons in hopes to reclaim the member. If in the judgment of the board they are unsuccessful, the board may present that member's name to be placed on the church's inactive list. This shall be done at the annual church business* meeting and if the membership agrees, said member will automatically be a member not in good standing and will lose church privileges as mentioned elsewhere in this constitution.

In such cases, the pastor, deacon, or other persons authorized to do so, will occasionally contact that member during the following year in hope of reclaiming said member.

If that person responds and displays satisfactory renewed spiritual interest and attendance for at least 90 days, the board of deacons may call for a special church business meeting or may wait until the next annual business meeting when they may request a vote for reinstatement. A 2/3 vote shall be required.

If that person fails to respond during that year on the inactive list, the board of deacons shall present that person to be dropped from the membership with a notification that it was due to disinterest and not disciplinary action. A permanent record of these former members shall be maintained for continued prayerful effort to reclaim them for Christ and the Church.

Acceptable reasons for extended absenteeism are being away at school, in the service of our state or nation, an extended illness, physical frailty, wintering in warmer climates, and any other reason judged to be legitimate by the pastor and board of deacons. Even in these cases, members are urged to be active in any available church of like faith and practice if at all possible.

Section VIII. Qualification of Voters

Only those members in good standing and of legal age are qualified to vote at any corporate business meeting or church business meeting.

A member in good standing is a member of the Bethel Baptist Church that is not under any form of church discipline, trial period, nor on any inactive membership list,

and is considered an active member throughout Article IV of the Constitution.

The intent is to prevent undeserving and inactive or former members from attempting to control church and corporate business meetings when they are not interested enough to regularly attend church services and functions.

Other persons not allowed to vote include associate members and regular members in good standing that, due to special circumstances, have remained on the church rolls but are not in regular attendance. Their vote is removed as they may be unfamiliar with situations surrounding any given question. They will, however, be allowed comment on motions at business meetings. (An example of such a person is someone away in the Armed Services.)

It should be noted that there will be no absentee ballots on any subject because such a voter would not be present to hear the discussions preceding the vote.

ARTICLE V. SPECIAL CHURCH POLICIES

Section I. Stewardship

Realizing that all we have has come from our Lord, we know that we are held accountable for what we have. As His stewards we must hold ourselves responsible for the regular support of His work by our prayers, finances, time, talents, spiritual gifts, involvement, and attendance.

We believe that the giver relinquishes all rights to direct the use of the offering once the gift has been made. It will be the responsibility of the trustees to determine the use of any designated gift. (Acts 6:1-4)

Any questions regarding financial matters or donations/gifts shall be referred to the board of trustees.

If the born again believers of this local church ever lack enough interest in this work of the Lord to support it by free will gifts, it shall not raise funds for its support by means of bazaars, church suppers, bingo, lotteries, or any method other than free will giving out of love for Christ.

If the church cannot support itself, it shall then follow the process of disbanding as mentioned elsewhere in this constitution. (I Cor. 16:2, II Cor. 9:7-8, Luke 19:45, Mal 3:10)

Section II. The Lord's Supper

Persons having received Jesus Christ are urged, after careful self-examination, to partake of the Lord's Supper as a perpetual reminder of the great sacrifice that Christ made for us. (Luke 22:19, I Cor. 11:23-30, 10:16-22)

Section III. Baptism

Believers are baptized by the Holy Spirit upon their acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord. (I Cor. 12:13)

All persons that have received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord are urged to make a public testimony of their faith by following the Lord in baptism by immersion even as Christ and the early Christians did. (Matt 3:16, Mark 1:8-18, John 3:22, Acts 2:38-41, 8:36-37, 18:8)

We believe that baptism shows forth in a symbolic way our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior as well as our death to sin and our resurrection to a new life in Christ but that the act itself in no way has any saving power. (Matt 28:19, Acts 2:38-41, 8:36-39, Rom. 6:4)

Section IV. Tongues and Healing

We believe there is no place in our church/activities for the argumentation of or the practice of glossolalia (speaking in tongues). We believe the Scriptures teach us to discourage and avoid these things. We also believe in the "Divine Healer" but not in so-called divine healers. (I Cor. chapters 12, 13,14) (See Articles of Faith section 5)

Section V. Election, Predestination, and Missions

We believe that although God is sovereign, all persons may accept Christ as Savior and are not prevented from it by "predestination" or "election"*. We shall not tolerate disruptive argumentation concerning this subject.

We believe that God has given the church a great commission to proclaim the Gospel to all nations so that there might be a great multitude from every nation, tribe, ethnic group, and language group who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. As ambassadors of Christ we must use all available means to go to the foreign nations and not wait for them to come to us. (Matt 28:19-20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:46-48, John 20:21, Acts 1:8, II Cor. 5:20)

Section VI. Coming Events-Last Days

We believe the following events will take place in the following sequence: the Apostasy when many will claim to be Christ and these are the Antichrists; the resurrection or rapture of all believers; the seven year Tribulation Period; the glorious return of Jesus Christ to rule the earth for 1,000 years; the resurrection, judgment, and eternal punishment of the wicked; and the eternal bliss of the righteous in the presence of Christ forever.

We will not exclude from our membership those that may disagree with all of these events in this sequence but we will not tolerate disruptive argumentation concerning this subject. (Matt 24:21-30, 25:31-46, I Cor. 14:40, I Thess. 4:13-18, II Tim 3:1-7, Rev 20:6, 11-15, 22:14, 15, 20; 4:1)

Section VII. Legalism and Liberalism

Realizing that legalism* and liberalism* are both detrimental to the spiritual well-being of any true church of God, we solemnly warn every member of this congregation to ever be on guard of both extremes. Be especially aware of the warning to churches found in Rev. 2, 3, 22:18-19.

Section VIII. Abortions

We believe that human life begins at conception and that the unborn child is a living human being. Abortion constitutes the unjustified, unexcused taking of unborn human life. Abortion is murder. We reject any teaching that abortions of pregnancies due to rape, incest*, birth defects, gender selection, birth or population control, or the mental well-being of the mother are acceptable. (Job 3:16, Psalms 51:5, 139:14-16, Isa 44:24, 49:1, 5, Jer. 1:5, 20:15-18, Luke 1:44)

Section IX. Disputes Between Believers

We believe that Christians are prohibited from bringing civil lawsuits against other Christians or the church to resolve personal disputes. We believe the Bible provides all the necessary means to resolve personal disputes between members. We do believe, however, that a Christian may seek compensation for injuries from another Christian's insurance company as long as the claim is pursued without malice, slander, intent to punish, and/or undue financial gain. (I Cor. 6:1-8, Eph. 4:31-32)

Section X. Divorce and Remarriage

We believe that God hates divorce and intends marriage to last until one of the spouses die. Divorce and remarriage is regarded as adultery except on the grounds of

marital unfaithfulness. We believe divorced and remarried persons or divorced persons may hold positions of service in the church and be greatly used of God for Christian service. In the case of candidates for the offices of pastor or deacon, the board of deacons shall determine whether unusual circumstances permit a divorced person to hold office. (Mal 2:14-17; Matt 19:3-12; Rom 7:1-3; I Tim 3:2,12; Titus 1:6)

Section XI. Special Use of Church Facilities

Any use of church facilities other than for church activities must be preapproved by the board of trustees at least two weeks prior to the requested use, except for funerals. The trustees shall establish and maintain specific policies for such use.

A. Weddings held in or on church property shall first be approved by the pastor and board of deacons and each judged on its own merit.

1. Weddings shall be performed here only between a man and a woman both known to be born again* believers who have completed some form of counseling by a born again pastor. (II Cor. 6:14, 15)

2. Any pastor performing a marriage here must be a born again man approved by the board of deacons.

3. Those sponsoring the wedding shall be responsible for clean-up. (See the trustee policy for special use of church facilities.)

B. Receptions* of any kind held in or on church property shall first be approved by the pastor and board of deacons and each judged on its own merit. (A complete description of the use of the church buildings and grounds shall be presented to the board of trustees at least two weeks prior to the event.)

1. There will be no alcoholic beverages or other mind altering drugs in any form served at receptions or any other activity held here.

2. Those sponsoring the reception shall be responsible for clean-up. (See the trustee policy for special use of church facilities)

C. Funerals and memorial services held in or on church property shall first be approved by the pastor and board of deacons and each judged on its own merit.

Funerals and memorial services of both believers and unbelievers may be held

here as long as the saving gospel of Jesus Christ is presented in some form during the service.

D. Our pastors shall use their own judgment regarding their policies involving weddings, funerals, and memorial services performed by them elsewhere.

ARTICLE VI. MEETINGS

Section I. Worship Services

A. In addition to Sunday School, Sunday morning and evening services, whenever possible, the church shall maintain a mid-week prayer and praise service.

B. Other services for special occasions may be authorized by the board of deacons as the need arises for fulfilling the purpose of the church.

C. When possible, the ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be held on the first Sunday of each month and/or at such other times as designated by the board of deacons.

Section II. Business Meetings

Everyone should be aware of the difference between corporate business* meetings and church business* meetings. New York State law requires churches to be incorporated in order to take advantage of any privileges that may be granted to churches and pastors. It is therefore required that at least one corporate meeting be held a year to take care of temporal business. This will include election of trustees, salaries, maintenance, improvements, construction, transfers of property, holdings indebtedness, and the like as described further on in this article.

Church business is taken care of at church business meetings. These meetings deal with the spiritual aspects of the church such as membership, discipline, worship services, election of deacons and Sunday School superintendent, ordinances, doctrines, propagation of the faith, missions and the like as described further on in this article.

The County Court Law Library has a book entitled Religious Corporation Laws and on pages 131-138 are found the following regulations that apply to Baptist and other congregational* type churches of which we are one.

1. Corporate and church business meetings must be held at least once a year and must be announced in two successive Sunday morning services preceding the business

meeting or a letter sent to all members two weeks in advance of that meeting.

2. A chairman and secretary must be elected at each corporate and business meeting.

3. A board of trustees must be elected by the church membership in numbers of either 3, 6, 9, or 12.

4. Trustees may not sell, buy, or construct on property nor incur debt without the 2/3 vote approval of those members voting at a legally called corporate business* meeting for that specific purpose.

5. A quorum* at any business meeting shall be at least six qualified voting members in good standing* at the time of the vote. (See Article VI, Section IV part E)

6. Trustees or any other board or committee may not fix the salary package of the pastor or any other employee of the church. They may recommend but it is the responsibility of the membership to set all salaries at a legally called business meeting.

7. As a congregational form of government this membership shall have the final say on any church or corporate business. A simple majority rules unless stated otherwise in this constitution.

A. Annual corporate and church business meetings shall be held by the last Sunday evening (amended 2015 and October 2020) of January each year. The purpose of this meeting shall be to elect necessary church officers, receive reports from the pastor, officers, boards, and committees of the year's activities, and act upon any other appropriate corporate business. This meeting may be postponed due to weather or some other serious reason by agreement of both deacons* and trustees but the new date must be re-announced properly.

B. Special corporate business meetings may be called any time it is necessary by the board of trustees or by the board of deacons or may be called upon written request of at least six qualified member voters representing at least five families of the church. These must also be called in the legally prescribed manner. Any desired quarterly meetings fall under this category.

C. Regular church business meetings may be held when necessary to act upon recommendations for membership or other routine business. This requires at least one week advance notification at the Sunday morning service preceding the business meeting. The names of candidates for membership shall be included in the announcement.

D. Special church business meetings may be called by the board of trustees, the board of deacons, or may be called upon written request of at least six qualified member voters representing at least five families of the church when it becomes necessary to consider calling a pastor, dismissal, excommunication, or other serious church matters. These meetings must be called in the legally prescribed manner. Any desired quarterly meetings fall under this category.

Section III. Announcement of Meetings

A. Any corporate business meeting or special church business meeting shall be legally announced from the pulpit two consecutive Sunday mornings preceding such meeting, or

B. A written notice of the same shall be mailed two weeks in advance of said meeting to each member of legal voting age in good standing.

C. Whether by announcement or by letter, it must contain the time, date, location, and major items of business to be transacted, and whether closed to non-members.

Section IV. Meeting Procedures

A. The chairman of any corporate or special church meeting may be the pastor, board chairman, or any other active member in good standing who is elected at that particular meeting. Regular church meetings will be chaired by the pastor unless voted otherwise.

B. The secretary of any corporate or special church meeting may be the church clerk, or any other active member in good standing who is elected at that particular meeting. He* has the responsibility of getting the minutes of that meeting into the permanent record of the church clerk. At any regular church meeting the church clerk will act as secretary unless voted otherwise.

C. Non-members may attend business meetings as observers unless the official announcement of said meeting denies that privilege. Also, the chairman of any business meeting needs to be alert to the non-members present and has the responsibility of granting or rejecting the right of non-members to speak. The chairman may tell non-members to leave the meeting in the event of sensitive subjects involving members. (This may be brought to the attention of the chairman by any member.)

D. Close votes may require the chairman of the meeting and the board of deacons

to confer regarding the number of members in good standing present.

E. Twenty per cent (20%) of the total voting membership in good standing, present at any corporate or church business meeting, shall constitute a quorum. At the very least six members must be present to do business if the membership should ever be seriously depleted.

F. Meetings, services, or activities of any kind other than those clearly stated, shall not be held in or on church property without the express consent of the board of deacons and board of trustees.

G. The following order shall be observed at business meetings:

A. Prayer (and devotion if desired).

B. Election of chairman and secretary for each meeting, except at regular church meetings where the pastor and church clerk officiate.

C. Reading of minutes.

D. Membership related business.

E. Reports by officers and committees.

F. Old business.

G. New business.

H. Election of officers.

I. Adjournment.

J. Benediction.

In the interest of maintaining order, the chairman shall have considerable latitude in how the meetings are conducted. If ever necessary he* may appoint Sergeant-at-Arms to restore order. (Members are required to obey peacefully.) The chairman's orders can always be overturned by proper action of the majority of the voting members present at any time

ARTICLE VII. ELECTED OFFICERS

Section I. Offices and General Requirements

A. The elected officers of this church shall be senior pastor, assistant pastor(s) deacons, trustees, auditors, clerk, treasurer, financial secretary and Sunday school superintendent. Any other positions required shall first be approved by the board of deacons after serious consideration.

As an accommodation to legal relationships outside the church the pastor shall serve as president of the corporation; the church clerk shall serve as secretary of the corporation; the church treasurer shall serve as treasurer of the corporation; the chairman of the board of deacons shall serve as vice president in charge of the spiritual church; and the chairman of the board of trustees* shall serve as vice president in charge of the physical church.

B. Except for the pastor, no one shall be elected to any office who has not been an active member of this church in good standing for at least one year. Upon special recommendation of the pastor and deacons, a person may be considered by the church for an office after six months of membership. (I Tim 3:16)

All officers of the church shall be spiritually mature, of unquestionable Christian character, devoted to Christ Jesus and to the Word of God. They shall have shown considerable interest in the worship services and the business meetings of this church as well as demonstrated moral conduct beyond reproach. In light of the Scriptures regarding church officers, the home and family relations must be seriously considered. They will give church sacred pre-eminence over all organizations of human origin.

I Timothy chapter 3 shall be closely scrutinized as guidelines for the selection of all church officers, especially by the nominating committee*. (It is better to have a vacant office than have it filled by an unqualified and unspiritual person.)

C. If any officer neglects his* duties as outlined in this constitution for a period of three months without justified reasons, he* shall be removed from office by a majority vote of the church at a properly called corporate or church business meeting after a fair investigation and hearing has been conducted by the deacons.

D. If a vacancy occurs in any elected office, that office may be temporarily filled by an appointment made at a joint meeting of the deacon and trustee boards. This appointment shall stand until the next annual business meeting when the position shall be filled by the normal elective process.

E. When necessary, a qualified person may hold more than one office, except that

of pastor.

Section II a. Senior Pastor

A. Qualifications

They shall be men of God in full accord with the purpose of the church, the Church Covenant, and the Articles of Faith. They shall willingly subscribe to this constitution and shall follow the procedures of becoming a member of this church. They shall fit the Lord's requirements as outlined in the New Testament as specified in I Tim 3 and Titus 1:5-9.

B. Calling

The pastor shall be called at a special church business meeting legally called for that purpose and receiving at least 80% of the ballots cast.

If the candidate does not receive 80% of the vote, he shall be rejected, and the selection process repeated. A successful candidate shall be notified by the Pulpit Committee of the actual ballot count. This notification shall also inform him of his salary and benefits.

C. Term

The term of office shall be for an unspecified period and shall terminate by the pastor's resignation or by a request for such a resignation by a majority vote of the members present at a special church business meeting called for that purpose. In either case, for one to three months notice must be given except in such case as the pastor is proven to be involved in moral transgression, whereupon the dismissal shall be immediate.

The pastor shall be eligible for vacation in accordance with the agreed upon compensation package. This time will be taken at the pastor's discretion with a reasonable notification to the board of deacons. The pastor's salary and fringe benefits shall be reviewed and determined at each annual corporate meeting.

Whenever a pastor and family leaves this ministry, it shall be understood that those of the family who were members will automatically be removed from membership unless some other special arrangements are made.

D. Duties

The pastor shall preach the Gospel at the regular services of the church; administer the ordinances; do pastoral visitation; review and approve all literature used in the church; serve as ex-officio member of every board and committee of the church with the exception of the pulpit committee*; and perform any other duty that applies to the office of pastor that may be delegated by the deacons and by this constitution. (The term ex-officio is to mean "because of his office of pastor he may attend all board and committee meetings and give input, but he is not to be a voting member nor an officer of those boards and committees.")

There will be times when it is not appropriate for the pastor to attend certain board, committee, or church meetings. At these times he and his family will be dismissed. One example will be during the annual business meeting or trustee meeting when his compensation package is to be discussed. At such times, they may be asked to attend briefly to express their views but then will be dismissed.

Section II b. Assistant Pastor(s)

A. Qualifications - Same as Senior Pastor

B. Calling - Same as Senior Pastor

C. Term - Same as Senior Pastor

D. Duties

1. The assistant pastor(s) shall assist the senior pastor and board of deacons in any proper way for the efficient operation of Bethel Baptist Church in order to fulfill its purposes.

2. He may be put in charge of specific facets of the church's ministry such as evangelism, youth activities, etc.

3. He may fill in for the senior pastor when asked by the board of deacons and/or senior pastor.

4. The deacons may establish other duties as needed.

5. He may be an ex-officio member of every board and committee (as the senior pastor is) unless the deacon board determines otherwise or as an exception as explained under the senior pastor's "Duties."

Section III. Deacons

A. Qualifications

They shall be men of God who, as active members, are in full accord with the purpose of this church, Church Covenant and Articles of Faith, and subscribe to the constitution of this church. They shall meet the Lord's requirements for leaders as stated in I Tim 3. Besides meeting the requirements set forth in Section I part B of this article, we believe that deacons shall maintain exemplary Christian attitudes and behavior at all times, thus setting a good example.

B. Term

There shall be from 3 to 6 on the board. The actual number may be determined by the congregation at the annual business meeting. The current deacon board will make a recommendation to the church as to the actual number needed. Whenever possible, the office shall not be held for more than two full three year terms with at least one year in between before being nominated again.

C. Duties

1. They shall, with the pastor, be in charge of the spiritual welfare of the church family. They shall meet within 30 days after the annual business meeting and shall elect a chairman and secretary from among the deacons.
2. They shall, with the pastor, administer the ordinances.
3. They shall, with the pastor, provide for pulpit supply in the pastor's absence, making sure each service is supervised either by themselves or someone selected by them.
4. They shall be consulted at all times regarding all special speakers and groups desiring to meet in the church.
5. They shall prayerfully consider and interview all applicants for church membership as described in Article IV, Section II.
6. They shall be responsible for certain money, designated for that purpose (The Deacon's Fund), giving it to needy persons in the church family or in special cases to persons in the community. A general accounting of the receipts and distributions of said money shall be given at each annual meeting. No names of givers or recipients shall be mentioned.
7. They shall approve or reject all suggested appointments to any non-elective

positions in the church.

8. They shall be responsible for reporting their activities to the congregation at business meetings of the church. This would, of course, exclude anything of a personal nature.

9. They shall act as a Missionary Committee, unless a special Missionary Committee is designated, keeping the membership posted and interested in missionary activities. When they feel it necessary, they shall recommend that the church support missionaries or related activities.

10. They, with the pastor, shall act as the Disciplinary Committee.

11. They shall fulfill any other responsibilities as mentioned elsewhere in this constitution as well as those placed on them in the future by the membership.

12. They, along with the trustees, shall exercise all powers necessary for the dissolution of the church corporation, if such action is mandated by a vote of the church membership.

Section IV. Trustees

A. Qualifications

They shall be men who, as active members, are in full accord with the purpose of this church, the Church Covenant, Articles of Faith, and subscribe to the constitution of this church. They shall meet the Lord's requirements for leaders as stated in I Tim 3 and Section I, part B of this article.

B. Term

There shall be six on the board. They shall be elected for three year terms. Whenever possible, the office shall not be held for more than two full three year terms with at least one year in between before being nominated again.

C. Duties

1. They shall meet within 30 days after the annual business meeting and elect a chairman and secretary from among themselves.
2. They shall see to the administration of all properties and be responsible for the care of such properties.

3. They shall have authority to sell or purchase real property or borrow money only with the 2/3 vote approval of membership present at a corporate business meeting properly called for that purpose.

4. They must authorize all expenditures from the church treasury. Expenditures over \$2000 will not be made without a majority approval at a duly called church business meeting, except in a dire emergency.

5. They shall keep the congregation posted on all church business.

6. They may appoint, with the deacon's approval, any committees and non-elected officers necessary for the smooth operation of the church.

7. They, along with the deacons, shall exercise all powers necessary for the dissolution of the church corporation, if such action is mandated by a vote of the church membership.

8. Besides overseeing the regular offerings, they shall have authority to set up special funds and offerings whose moneys shall take their regular course through the financial secretary and church treasurer.

9. They must approve and monitor all other minor church accounts maintained by church approved programs. They may review the records of these accounts at any time. The treasurers of those accounts are to be responsible for keeping organized records of the income and disbursements as well as keeping records of the identified givers and providing receipts to them if requested.

10. The trustees may call upon the church treasurer and/or the financial secretary for direction on keeping track of these finances (see item 9), if necessary. When there is any trustee business involving the treasurer's and financial secretary's responsibilities, the trustees will keep them informed.

Section V a. Treasurer

A. Qualifications

The treasurer shall be an active member of the church in good standing and meet the qualifications as stated in Section I part B of this article.

B. Term

One year and may succeed self.

C. Duties - The Treasurer

1. Will be custodian of all money which has been deposited into the church treasury (bank account) by the financial secretary.
2. Will pay all bills authorized by the trustees.
3. Will present books to be audited at the request of the auditors, trustees, or deacons. The books must be audited at least once a year before the annual meeting.
4. May attend all trustee meetings and give input about financial issues but has no voting rights. He may be asked to leave the meeting due to confidential matters or other circumstances that are reserved for trustee board knowledge only.
5. Will work closely and cooperatively with the trustees and financial secretary and will report any discrepancies to the Trustee Board.
6. Will request the trustees to appoint an assistant if necessary.
7. Should become familiar with the trustees responsibilities.
8. Will maintain the confidentiality of all information regarding all individuals' donations.
9. Will comply with all Federal, State and other governmental tax requirements (such as W-2 forms, quarterly reports, etc.)

Section V b. Financial Secretary

A. Qualifications - (same as Treasurer)

B. Term - (same as Treasurer)

C. Duties

1. Except for the Sunday School offerings, deacons' fund offerings and most minor church accounts, he will be custodian of all moneys from regular offerings, special offerings, and gifts given to the church until they are deposited into the church treasury (i.e. bank account). (See Article VII, Section IV.)

2. Will record accurately all the donations and the name of givers if they were identified.
3. Will furnish a statement of giving to that giver when requested.
4. Will make available all books/records for auditing if requested by the auditors, trustees or deacons. This audit must be done at least once a year before the Annual Meeting.
5. Will work closely and cooperatively with the treasurer and trustees and will report any discrepancies to the Trustee Board.
6. Will request the trustees to appoint an assistant, if necessary.
7. Will maintain the confidentiality of all information regarding all individuals' donations.

Section VI. Clerk

A. Qualifications

The clerk shall be an active member of the church in good standing and meet the qualifications as stated in Section I part B of this article.

B. Term

One year and may succeed self.

C. Duties

1. The clerk shall keep records of proceedings of all business meetings of the church and upon their request, within 30 days after each meeting, the clerk shall provide a copy of the minutes to the chairman of the deacons and trustees.
2. The clerk shall give a report at the annual corporate business meeting and upon request of the pastor or the board of deacons.
3. The clerk shall have charge of all records of membership, death, baptism, and weddings.
4. In the event someone other than the clerk is secretary of any meeting, they must get the minutes of that meeting into the clerk's records for filing.

Section VII. Auditors

A. Qualifications

Auditors shall be active members of the church in good standing and meet the qualifications as stated in Section I, part B of this article. Auditors shall not be a treasurer or trustee of this church, nor if possible directly related to them.

B. Term

There shall be two auditors, each elected for one year and may succeed themselves.

C. Duties

They shall audit all treasurer's books of the church (except the Deacon's Fund, which is confidential) and submit their report to the church body at the annual corporate business meeting.

If, during their audit, there are any discrepancies, they will contact all concerned parties including the trustees prior to the annual meeting in order to clarify the situation.

Section VIII. Sunday School Superintendent

A. Qualifications

The Sunday school superintendent shall be an active member of the church in good standing and meet the qualifications as stated in Section I, part B of this article.

B. Term

One year and may succeed self.

C. Duties

1. Select all teacher and Sunday school officers and present them to the board of deacons for approval. All teachers and Sunday school officers shall be active members of the church in good standing for at least one year. This requirement may be waived upon special recommendation by the Sunday school superintendent and the approval of the board of deacons.

2. Select Sunday school materials with the aid of the teachers and submit it to

the pastor and board of deacons upon their request for approval.

3. Be responsible for financing the activities and materials of the Sunday school by taking weekly offerings in classes and requesting additional funds from the trustees when necessary.

4. Be responsible for daily vacation bible school and other related activities when required.

5. Be responsible to give statistical and financial reports at the annual corporate business meeting or upon request of the pastor or board of deacons.

ARTICLE VIII. PROGRAMS/LEADERS

Any program or activity affiliated with this church must have prior approval by the board of deacons and the pastor. Any leader(s) involved in any of this church's activities or programs must be an active church member in good standing and have the approval of the board of deacons and the pastor. Assistants, upon approval of the board of deacons and the pastor, may be non-members. The board of deacons may monitor any program or activity at any time, make recommendations, and go before the church membership to report on any program or activity.

ARTICLE IX. COMMITTEES

All committees shall consist of active church members in good standing. The pastor shall be an ex-officio member of all committees. (See Article VII, Section II under Duties.) The board of deacons may monitor all committees at any time, make recommendations, and go before the church membership to report on any committee.

Section I. Nominating Committee

The nominating committee, using Article VII as their guide, shall consist of three members, one of which shall be a deacon who is not up for re-election. The committee members shall be appointed by the pastor and approved by the deacons at least one month preceding the annual church and corporate business meeting. The committee shall submit a list at least one week prior to the annual business meeting.

In the absence of a pastor, the board of deacons shall appoint the nominating committee.

The nominating committee shall realize the grave responsibility of their task and review the qualifications of each office to be filled. They shall then seek out qualified,

willing members in good standing to serve in the appropriate offices. They shall explain the basic responsibilities of the offices to any prospective nominee and shall put in nomination the committee's approved choices at the annual business meeting. (Nominations from the floor shall also be allowed.)

Section II. Pulpit Committee

The pulpit committee shall consist of either five or seven active church members in good standing that are elected at a church business meeting called for that purpose. At least one deacon and one trustee shall serve on the committee.

They shall provide a temporary pulpit supply while seeking a permanent pastor.

They shall find a candidate who fulfills the requirements as stated elsewhere in this constitution.

They shall present only one candidate at a time to the congregation and the church shall vote on that candidate before considering any other.

The church shall pay any expenses incurred by this committee at the approval of the trustees.

Section III. Constitution Review Committee

When a review of the church constitution is deemed necessary by the board of deacons, the board of trustees, or the church membership, a committee shall be appointed by the pastor or the chairman of the board of deacons. The appointments shall be given to the board of deacons for their approval.

If a change in the constitution is thought to be needed by the committee, it shall be handled as dictated by Article XI.

Section IV. Missionary Committee

A. The missionary committee shall consist of five active members in good standing appointed by the pastor and approved by the board of deacons and announced at the annual meeting. At least one member shall be a deacon.

B. Duties

1. They shall recommend missionaries and mission projects to be supported by the church.

2. They shall promote the prayer and financial support of the missions' activities.
3. They shall have regular correspondence with the supported missions and report periodically to the congregation the status of each.
4. They shall draft an annual missionary report to be presented to the church at the annual meeting and recommend those persons and projects to be supported for the coming year.
5. They shall plan occasional missionary programs and invite speakers to stimulate interest in missions and to challenge people to serve on the home mission and foreign mission field.

ARTICLE X. DISSOLUTION

Upon the dissolution of the church the deacons and trustees shall, after paying or making provision for payment of all the liabilities of the church, dispose of all of the assets of the church to such organization or organizations formed and operated exclusively for religious purposes as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law), as the trustees and deacons shall determine. Assets may be distributed only to organizations which agree with the church's Articles of Faith.

ARTICLE XI. AMENDMENTS

The constitution may be amended by a 2/3 vote of the members in good standing present at any corporate business meeting legally called for that purpose.

ARTICLE XII. ADOPTION

This constitution, as printed above, was officially adopted by the members of Bethel Baptist Church of Oneida County on February 7, 2002.

As amended and revised this constitution supersedes and replaces all other constitutions of this church prior to the adoption date above.

It is the prayer and hope of this church that it will remain true to God's Word and the basic concepts of this constitution until our Lord returns to take home His Church Universal. AMEN.

Glossary

(As defined by this church)

Adultery - sexual unfaithfulness of a married person

Apostasy - falling away from Bible truths and/or this church's Articles of Faith

Apostate - one who practices apostasy

Articles of Faith - the basic doctrines one must believe in order to be a member of Bethel Baptist Church

Association - a group of Baptist churches voluntarily cooperating in order to accomplish that which is difficult or impossible to be done alone. However, any of these churches may withdraw at any time for any reason.

Attender - non-member who fellowships at our church

Bestiality - any kind of sex involving any animal and a human

Bisexuality - sexual involvement with both sexes

Born Again - believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that His shed blood, death, burial and resurrection both paid for the believer's sin and assures the believer eternal life with Christ thus being born into the family of God (John 1:12 & Chapter 3)

Brother - a fellow believer

Church - called out group of believers in Christ

Church Business - business that deals with the spiritual aspects of the church

Congregational form of Government - a form of government where the members have the final say on any corporate or church business

Corporate Business - business that deals with physical and legal aspects of the church

Deacons - men elected to be responsible for the spiritual well-being of the church

Denomination - a group of churches bound together and controlled by some ecclesiastical person or organization

Ecclesiastical - pertaining to the church and its organization

Eccumenicalism - the joining of different religious groups for the sake of unity regardless of doctrinal differences

Election and Predestination - terms not fully understood but generally thought to mean God chooses those who are to be saved (but we believe people are still free to choose or reject Christ)

Excommunication - removing one from the church as a result of discipline

Ex Officio - because of his office, he may attend all board and committee meetings and give input but is not to be a voting member or officer of same

Fornication - sexual intercourse outside of marriage

Fundamentalist - one who believes all the Bible is God's Word and believes in the basic tenets of our faith such as are in our Articles of Faith

He - refers to he or she

Homosexuality - when two humans of the same sex are romantically involved and men in particular

Husband of One Wife - a one woman man (exclusive devotion to his wife)

Incest - sexual relations between close relatives

Legalism - the doctrine that salvation is gained through good works or the wrong attitude toward the code of law under which a person lives; exalting self rather than God

Lesbianism - homosexuality between women

Liberalism - an attitude that emphasizes freedom from or undermines our fundamental beliefs

Members in Good Standing - those voted to be members by the existing membership of this church whom are not under any form of discipline, trial period nor on any inactive membership list

Nominating Committee - a committee who must present a slate of officers to the membership at

the annual business meeting

Non-Denominational - not belonging to any denomination but may associate with churches or groups voluntarily

Ordinances, The - Baptism and the Lord's Supper which Christ decreed or ordained

Pornography - that which is written, drawn, photographed or listened to, designed primarily to cause sexual excitement

Pulpit Committee - a committee formed to find a pastor, sometimes called a Search Committee

Quorum - twenty per cent (20%) of the members in good standing necessary in order to vote on any business

Receptions - special occasion such as weddings, anniversaries, birthdays, graduations, etc., where food and/or non-alcoholic drinks may be served

Stewardship - the management of what God has entrusted to us

Trustees - men elected to be responsible for the physical and legal well-being of the church

**Amendment Number One
To the Constitution of Bethel Baptist Church**

SEXUALITY

Bethel Baptist Church affirms biblical views of human sexuality. We believe the Bible is God's authoritative Word for all matters for the church. Therefore, we teach and promote abstinence from any and all sexual activity or expression outside the boundaries and bonds of monogamous, heterosexual marriage. (See Article III, Section XI - The Purity of the Church.)

We believe that the only legitimate marriage is the joining of one man and one woman. The Scripture declares that a sexual relationship or marriage between two individuals of the same sex as determined by birth, conflicts with God's design and plan for mankind. (Genesis 2:23,24; Matthew 19:4,5; Romans 1:26,27; 7:1-4; Leviticus 18:1-30) Therefore, anyone who practices this sexual immorality (i.e.: homosexuality, etc.) violates God's Word. No marriage license or government approval of the "homosexuality orientation", or any other sinful sexual activity as defined in Article III, Section XI of this Constitution can validate that "orientation" or "lifestyle", for God's prohibition cannot be satisfied or amended by human authorities.

In a Biblical view, God defines one's gender at conception, prior to birth. One is either a male or a female. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance. Sexuality, however, while a gift of God, is often perverted to sinful ends by both men and women. Sexual expression is a moral choice. According to the Bible, God defines all forms of sexual immorality as sin, and God condemns any and all alternatives to monogamous, heterosexual marriage. (Genesis 2:23,24; 19:5,13; 26:8,9; Leviticus 18:1-30; Romans 1:26-29; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4)

Bethel Baptist Church shall not hire for pay, or have voluntary help from, anyone who is a practicing homosexual, or believes that homosexuality is a valid alternative lifestyle, or engages in any immoral sexual activity as defined in Article III, Section XI of this Constitution. We believe that practicing homosexuality, or any other sinful sexual activity as defined in Article III, Section XI of this Constitution, is immoral according to God's Word, nor can such persons be considered for membership, or be retained as a member, but shall be dismissed from membership by majority vote of the church membership, in accordance with the Church Constitution. If they become a practicing homosexual, or become involved in the practice of any other sinful sexual activity as defined in Article III, Section XI of this Constitution, they shall be promptly dismissed from the staff position by the Pastor(s) and Deacon Board. (Genesis 19:1-25; Leviticus 18:22,23; 20:13; Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9,10). In addition, no person who has ever been accused of and found guilty by law or by the Church leadership (Pastor(s) and Deacon Board) of any form of immoral sexual activity shall be allowed to hold a position in or serve in any children's ministry of Bethel Baptist Church without prior approval of the Church leadership.

We are all “sinners”, but praise God this condition is not unalterable. If we have accepted Christ as our Savior, then we become “sinners saved by grace”. yet, sometimes the sin is more evident than the grace in our lives. Christians’ expression of human sexuality is influenced by this “sin and grace struggle” in the form of sexual temptations. The temptation in itself is not a sin; but dwelling on that temptation and yielding to it then becomes sin. Some Christians struggle with sexual immorality. Sometimes they yield to immoral behavior, as outlined in Article III, Section XI of this Constitution. This act of sin does not make anyone unforgivable, nor does it mean that by God’s grace they cannot change.

However, if an individual practices sexual immorality, they are violating God’s Word, and are subject to church discipline (see Article IV, Section V - Discipline). The object of church discipline is repentance and reconciliation. If there is repentance, the process of restoration will be under the supervision and discretion of the Pastor(s) and Deacon Board. However, if an individual does not repent and submit to an accountable process of restoration they shall be excluded from membership, fellowship, and service. (1 Corinthians Chapter 5)

Anyone desiring to be a member of Bethel Baptist Church must believe in and live in harmony with this policy.

This amendment was voted upon and approved on March 7, 2004.

I, _____, am a baptized, born again believer in Jesus
(print name)

Christ and am in full agreement with and understand the Articles of Faith of Bethel Baptist

Church and do willingly subscribe to its constitution. I fully realize that to violate it may

lead to church discipline. If I refuse to sign this agreement, I understand I am not a member

of this church even though I may attend and give regularly.

(signed)

(date)

Witnessed by _____