

Bethlehem Baptist Church, Greenbrier, AR

CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

We establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith and to govern this church body in an orderly manner. This constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual member and the freedom of this church body in relation to other churches.

ARTICLE I – NAME & LEGAL ORGANIZATION

The name of this church is **Bethlehem Baptist Church** of Greenbrier, AR; hereafter also referred to as “Bethlehem” or “BBC”. The physical and mailing address is 505 Hwy 225 W Greenbrier, AR 72058. Bethlehem is an unincorporated nonprofit association as defined by Ark. Code Ann. 4-28-6. The persons authorized to transfer an interest in real property held by Bethlehem Baptist Church are the Trustees who are elected and authorized according to the Constitution and Bylaws of this association.

ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

The purpose of Bethlehem is derived from and relies solely on the instructions, principles, and commands of the Bible. Bethlehem seeks to obey the Bible in all things that the church does. As such, the purpose of Bethlehem is to glorify God by impacting our community and the world by sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ, worshiping Jesus Christ as Lord, bringing people into membership in His local body (the New Testament church), equipping God’s people for ministry, and demonstrating God’s love by bearing one another’s burdens.

ARTICLE III – CHURCH COVENANT

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

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, doctrines, and discipline; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses 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 of and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage; to use our influence to combat the abuse of drugs and the spread of pornography; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and Christian 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 out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God’s Word.

ARTICLE IV – CHURCH GOVERNANCE AND DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATION

Section 1. The basis of Bethlehem’s governance shall be the authority given to the church in the Bible. The instructions, principles and commands of the Bible is our rule for faith and practice.

Section 2. The government of Bethlehem is vested in the body of saved, baptized believers who compose the local church by membership. Persons duly received shall constitute the membership.

Section 3. All internal groups created and empowered by Bethlehem shall report to and be accountable to the pastoral team and to the church membership, unless otherwise specified by church action. Church leaders, employees, and volunteers shall be selected, promoted, and compensated without regard to his or her race, ethnicity, or disability. However, consistent with the fundamental beliefs of our faith, the spiritual beliefs and creeds of such individuals shall be evaluated as a fundamental basis for employment selection or volunteer placement.

Section 4. Bethlehem is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but Bethlehem recognizes and sustains the obligation of mutual counsel and cooperation which are common among Baptist churches. Bethlehem shall determine, by vote, the associations or agencies with which it is affiliated.

Section 5. Bethlehem is associating and cooperating with the Baptist Missionary Association of Arkansas, the Baptist Missionary Association of America, and the local Greenbrier Association of the Baptist Missionary Association of Arkansas.

Section 6. In the event of significant disputes or conflict that might arise within the church body or leadership, such disputes shall be resolved through the use of Christian-based mediation.

ARTICLE V – DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

Section 1. God

There is one living and true God, the creator of the universe (Ex. 15:11; Is. 45:11; Jer. 27:5). He is revealed in the unity of the Godhead as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, who are equal in every divine perfection (Ex. 15:11; Matt. 28:19; II Co. 13:14).

A. God the Father is the supreme ruler of the universe. He providentially directs the affairs of history according to the purposes of His grace (Gen. 1; Ps. 19:1; Ps. 104; Heb. 1:1-3).

B. God the Son is the Savior of the world. Born of the virgin Mary (Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:26-35), He declared His deity among men (John 1:14, 18; Matt. 9:6), died on the cross as the only sacrifice for sin (Phil. 2:6-11), arose bodily from the grave (Luke 24:6,7, 24-26; I Co. 15:3-6), and ascended back to the Father (Acts 1:9-11; Mark 16:19). He is at the right hand of the Father, interceding for believers (Ro. 8:34; Heb. 7:25) until He returns to rapture them from the world (Acts 1:11; 1 Thess. 4:16-18).

C. God the Holy Spirit is the manifest presence of deity. He convicts of sin (John 16:8-11), teaches spiritual truths according to the written Word (John 16:12-15), permanently indwells believers (Acts 5:32; John 14:16,17,20,23), and confers on every believer at conversion the ability to render effective spiritual service (I Peter 4:10,11).

Section 2. The Scriptures

A. The Scriptures are God's inerrant revelation, complete in the Old and

B. New Testaments, written by divinely inspired men as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (II Tim 3:16; II Peter 1:21). Those men wrote not in words of human wisdom but in words taught by the Holy Spirit (I Co. 2:13).

C. The Scriptures provide the standard for the believer's faith and practice

D. II Tim. 3:16,17), reveal the principles by which God will judge all (Heb. 4:12; John 12:48), and express the true basis of Christian fellowship (Gal. 1:8,9; II John 9-11).

Section 3. Creation

A. The World—God created all things for His own pleasure and glory, as revealed in the biblical account of creation (Gen. 1; Rev. 4:11; John 1:2,3; Col. 1:16).

B. The Angels—God created an innumerable host of spirit beings called angels. Holy angels worship God and execute His will; while fallen angels serve Satan, seeking to hinder God's purposes (Col. 1:16; Luke 20:35,36; Matt. 22:29,30; Ps. 103:20; Jude 6).

C. Man—God created man in His own image. As the crowning work of creation, every person is of dignity and worth and merits the respect of all other persons (Ps. 8; Gen. 1:27,2:7; Matt 10:28-31).

D. Marriage – God created marriage (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:23-24). Jesus Christ declared the creator's intention for marriage to be the inseparable and exclusive union between a man and a woman (natural man and natural woman) (Matt. 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9). Marriage testifies of the union between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:31-32; Rom. 1:25-27).

Section 4. Satan

Satan is a person rather than a personification of evil (John 8:44), and he with his demons opposes all that is true and godly by blinding the world to the gospel (II Co. 4:3,4), tempting saints to do evil (Eph. 6:11; I Peter 5:8), and warring against the Son of God (Gen. 3:15; Rev, 20:1-10).

Section 5. Depravity

Although man was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26; 2:17), he fell because of sin and that image was marred (Ro. 5:12; James 3:9). In his unregenerate state, he is void of spiritual life, is under the influence of the devil, and lacks any power to save himself (Eph. 2:1-3; John 1:13). The sin nature has been transmitted to every member of the human race, the man Jesus Christ alone being excepted (Ro. 3:23; I Peter 2:22). Because of the sin nature, man possesses no divine life and is essentially and unchangeably depraved apart from divine grace (Ro. 3:10-19; Jer. 17:9).

Section 6. Salvation

A. The Meaning of Salvation—Salvation is the gracious work of God whereby He delivers undeserving sinners from sin and its results (Matt. 1:21; Eph. 2:8,9). In justification He declares righteous all who put faith in Christ as Savior (Ro. 3: 20-22), giving them freedom from condemnation, peace with God, and full assurance of future glorification (Ro. 3:24-26).

B. The Way of Salvation—Salvation is based wholly on the grace of God apart from works (Titus 3:5; Eph. 2:9). Anyone who will exercise repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved (Acts 16:30-32; Luke 24:47; Ro. 10:17).

C. The Provision of Salvation—Christ died for the sins of the whole world

D. (John 1:29; 3:16; I John 2:1,2). Through His blood, atonement is made without respect of persons (I Tim. 2:4-6). All sinners can be saved by this gracious provision (Heb. 2:9; John 3:18).

Section 7. Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom

God's sovereignty and man's freedom are two inseparable factors in the salvation experience (Eph. 2:4-6). The two Bible truths are in no way contradictory, but they are amazingly complementary in the great salvation so freely provided. God, in His sovereignty purposed, planned and executed salvation in eternity while man's freedom enables him to make a personal choice in time, either to receive this salvation and be saved, or to reject it and be damned (Eph. 1:9-14; John 1:12,13).

Section 8. Sanctification

All believers are set apart unto God (Heb. 10:12-14) at the time of their regeneration (I Cor. 6:11). They should grow in grace (II Peter 1:5-8) by allowing the Holy Spirit to apply God's Word to their lives (I Peter 2:2), conforming them to the principles of divine righteousness (Ro. 12:1,2; I Thess. 4:3-7), and making them partakers of the holiness of God (II Co. 7:1; I Peter 1:15,16).

Section 9. Security

All believers are eternally secure in Jesus Christ (John 10:24-30; Ro. 8:35-39). They are born again (John 3:3-5; I John 5:1; I Peter 1:23), made new creatures in Christ (II Co. 5:17; II Peter 1:4), and indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Ro. 8:9; I John 4:4), enabling their perseverance in good works (Eph. 2:10). A special providence watches over them (Ro. 8:28; I Co. 10:13), and they are kept by the power of God (Phil. 1:6,2:12,13; I Peter 1:3-5; Heb. 13:5).

Section 10. Church

A. The Nature of the Church—A New Testament church is a local congregation (Acts 16:5; I Co. 4:17) of baptized believers in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:41) who are united by covenant in belief of what God has revealed and in obedience to what He has commanded (Acts 2:41,42).

B. The Autonomy of the Church—She acknowledges Jesus as her only Head (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18) and the Holy Bible as her only rule of faith and practice (Isa. 8:20; II Tim. 3:16,17), governing herself by democratic principles (Acts 6:1-6; I Co. 5:1-5) under the oversight of her pastors (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:7,17,24).

C. The Perpetuity of the Church—Instituted by Jesus during His personal ministry on earth (Matt. 16:18; Mark 3:13-19; John 1:35-51), true churches have continued to the present and will continue until Jesus returns (Matt. 16:18; 28:20).

D. The Ordinances of the Church—Her two ordinances are baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is the immersion in water of a believer as a confession of his faith in Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19; Ro. 6:4) and is prerequisite to church membership and participation in the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:41,42). The Lord's Supper is the sacred sharing of the bread of communion and the cup of blessing by the assembled church (Acts 20:7) as a memorial to the crucified body and shed blood of Jesus Christ (Luke 22:19,20; I Co. 11:23-26). Both ordinances must be administrated by the authority of a New Testament church (Matt. 28:18-20; I Co. 11:23-26).

E. The Officers of the Church—Pastors and deacons are the permanent officers divinely ordained in a New Testament church (Phil. 1:1). Each church may select men of her choice to fill those offices under the leading of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:1-6; 20:17,18) according to the divinely given qualifications (I Tim. 3:1-13).

1. Pastors (elders, bishops) are authorized to oversee and teach the churches under the Lordship of Jesus Christ (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:7,17,24; I Peter 5:1-4). Each church is responsible to follow them as they follow Christ (I Co. 11:1; I Thess. 1:6; Heb. 13:17) and to provide a livelihood for them that they might fulfill their ministries (I Tim. 5:17,18; Phil. 4:15-18). Pastors are equal in the service of God (Matt. 23:8-12).
2. Deacons (ministers, servants) are servants of the churches and assistants to the pastors, particularly in benevolent ministries. Each church may select her own deacons according to her needs, and no church is bound by the act of another church in that selection (Acts. 6:1-6).
3. The offices of Pastor and Deacon are limited to men only (1 Tim 2:12; 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6).

F. The Ministry of the Church—Her mission is evangelizing sinners by preaching the gospel (Matt. 28:19; Luke 24:45-47), baptizing those who believe (Acts 2:41; 8:12,35-38), and maturing them by instruction (Matt. 28:20; Acts 2:42) and discipline (Matt. 18:17,18; I Co. 5:1-5).

G. The Fellowship of the Church—She is free to associate with true churches in furthering the faith (II Co. 11:8; Phil. 4:10,15,16) but is responsible to keep herself from those who hold doctrines or practices contrary to Holy Scripture (Gal. 1:8,9; I John 2:19). In association with other churches, each church is equal and is the sole judge of the measure and method of her cooperation (Matt. 20:25-28). In all matters of polity and practice, the will of each church is final (Matt. 18:18).

Section 11. Civil Authority

Human government was instituted by God to protect the innocent and punish the guilty. It is separate from the church, though both church and state exercise complementary ministries for the benefit of society (Matt. 22:21).

Christians should submit to the authority of the government under which they live, obeying all laws which do not contradict the laws of God, respecting officers of government, paying taxes, rendering military service, and praying for the welfare of the nation and its leaders (Ro. 13:1-7; I Peter 2:13,17; I Tim. 2:1,2). They should vote, hold office, and exercise influence to direct the nation after the principles of Holy Scripture.

Civil authority is not to interfere in matters of conscience or disturb the institutions of religion (Acts 4:18-20), but it should preserve for every citizen the free exercise of his religious convictions.

Churches should receive no subsidy from the government, but they should be exempt from taxation on property and money used for the common good through worship, education, or benevolence.

Section 12. Last Things

A. Return—Our risen Lord will return personally in bodily form to receive His redeemed unto Himself. His return is imminent (I Thess. 4:13-17; Rev. 22:20).

B. Resurrections—After Jesus returns, all of the dead will be raised bodily, each in his own order: the righteous dead in “the resurrection of life” and the wicked dead in “the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:24-29; I Co. 15:20-28).

C. Judgments—Prior to the eternal state, God will judge everyone to confer rewards or to consign to punishment (Matt. 25:31-46; II Co. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15).

D. Eternal States

Heaven is the eternal home of the redeemed (John 14:1-3) who, in their glorified bodies (I Co. 15:51-58), will live in the presence of God forever (I Thess. 4:17) in ultimate blessing (Rev. 21,22).

Hell is the place of eternal punishment and suffering (Luke 16:19-31) for the devil, his angels (Matt. 25:41), and the unredeemed (Rev. 20:10-15).

ARTICLE VI – MORAL STATEMENTS

Section 1. Sex and Gender. We believe God creates each person in His image as male or female (Gen 1:26-27). As such, God divinely ordains each person’s biological sex. Rejection of one’s biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person. The Bible nowhere condones a man believing himself to be a woman, or vice versa. The Bible is explicitly consistent in equating gender with biological sex. Biblically speaking, human beings are male or female. There is no gender spectrum or continuum taught in the Bible.

Section 2. Sexual Conduct. We believe God intends that all sexual activity should occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 Cor 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb 13:4). Therefore, we believe that one should abstain from sexual activity before marriage and maintain fidelity within marriage.

Section 3. Homosexuality. We believe God ordained marriage and sexual activity for one man and one woman (Gen 1:26-27; 2:18-25). The Bible condemns homosexuality as a rejection of this divinely ordained union

(Rom 1:26-27; 1 Cor 6:9-10). We believe that a person can be forgiven and sanctified through confession of sin, repentance (turning away from) from sin, and faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 6:9-11).

Section 4. Sanctity of Life. We believe God creates men and women in His image and gives life to all people (Gen 1:26-27; 2:7). Therefore, all human life is sacred, and any attempt to destroy human life by means of murder, suicide, or abortion is wrong (Gen 9:5-7; Exod 20:13).

ARTICLE VII – MARRIAGE AND WEDDINGS

We believe God instituted marriage as a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman (Gen 1:26-27; 2:18-25; Matt 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-9). Weddings are spiritual services that acknowledge and submit to God's sovereign design for marriage.

ARTICLE VIII – MEMBERSHIP

The membership of Bethlehem Baptist Church shall consist of all persons whose names appear on the church roll. The membership reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members of this church and the conditions of such membership. The requirements for church membership include salvation, scriptural baptism by immersion following salvation, and a request for church membership. Bethlehem will not make decisions regarding membership on the basis of race, ethnicity, or disability. However, consistent with the fundamental beliefs of our faith, the spiritual beliefs and creeds of such individuals shall be evaluated as a fundamental basis for membership. Thus, the membership of this church consists of persons who have received Jesus Christ as a personal Savior, who have had scriptural baptism by immersion, and who have submitted themselves to the church for membership. The Bylaws shall fully describe the requirements, reception, dismissal, discipline, and restoration of church members/membership.

ARTICLE IX – PROPERTY

Bethlehem Baptist Church (BBC) is not organized for profit. In the event of liquidation or dissolution of BBC, all of its assets and property of every nature and description whatsoever shall be transferred at the discretion of the church trustees to entities supported by BBC.

BBC real property may not be transferred or sold without the consent of a minimum of three trustees.

The facilities of BBC are set apart for the ministry of the Word of God and for the edification of His people. In keeping with this, no service or event may occur on BBC property that is not consistent with the doctrines, beliefs, or practices of the church. The Bylaws shall describe policies and processes that relate to the use of BBC property and facilities.

ARTICLE X – APPROVAL AND AMENDMENTS: Describes process for amending the church constitution

The Constitution is hereby adopted by the membership of Bethlehem Baptist Church at the business meeting of the church on the (Date of Business Meeting).

The Constitution and Bylaws may be amended provided the proposed amendment shall have been available in print and announced in accordance with rules laid out in the Bylaws of the church.

Amendments to this Constitution and Bylaws shall be two-thirds vote of members of the church who are qualified to vote and are present at the quarterly or called business meeting.