

BRIDGE OF FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Recognizing God as Lord and being humbled in His presence, we understand the mission of the Bridge of Faith is to bring glory to God in all things. We, the members, desire to accomplish this by a consistent worship of God, earnestly endeavoring to serve Him, to have a continued spiritual growth, to love each other as brothers and sisters in Christ and to share the gospel in an effort to bring our community and the world to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, and to disciple them.

BRIDGE OF FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH COVENANT

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

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

We also strive to maintain family and personal devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our friends and relatives; to walk uprightly before our God; to be just in our dealings; faithful in our actions; and exemplary in our conduct. We further strive to replace the works of the flesh, as outlined in Gal. 5:19-21, with the fruit of the Spirit, as described in Gal. 5:22-23, in order to be zealous in our efforts to promote and advance the kingdom of our Savior. The works of the flesh might include: the taking of human life, including abortion; any abusiveness, physical or mental; any illicit sexual behavior, including premarital sexual relations, adultery and homosexuality; pornography; the use of illegal drugs; the use of alcohol that results in drunkenness or unruly behavior; and, excessive anger, bitterness, etc.”

Moreover, we engage to apply Biblical principles to our everyday lives. When the laws of this land, whether at a national or state level, clearly violate scripture, we are morally obligated to follow Biblical principles rather than the mandates of man. If our opposition results in protest or demonstrations of any nature, we shall conduct ourselves with exemplary deportment and refrain from any type of violence or illegal activities.

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 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.

This constitution and covenant revised in 2019 is designed to be a working agreement between the members of this church for the purpose of promoting unity.

BRIDGE OF FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I. NAME

The corporate name of this organization shall be the BRIDGE OF FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH. (Church tax exemption #ES -1647)

ARTICLE II. OBJECT

The object of this church shall be the worship of God by the preaching of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ at home and abroad, trusting as a result, sinners shall be saved, and believers shall be edified.

ARTICLE III. DOCTRINE

The articles of faith of the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches (New Hampshire, *revised*) shall be the confession of faith of this church and shall include the prefaced Church Covenant.

ARTICLE IV. ASSOCIATIONS

A New Testament church cannot join anything outside of itself but can only fellowship on the grounds of the Word of God for the promotion and defense of "The Faith". This church declares itself in fellowship with the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches as long as this group **does not** depart from its present Biblical doctrinal position.

ARTICLE V. MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 1. PREREQUISITES

- A. Agreement with this constitution.
- B. Public confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and evidence of the "New Birth".
- C. Baptism by immersion in water following confession of faith.
- D. A church letter from a previous church (*if possible*).

SECTION 2. PROCEDURE

Every candidate shall give testimony of his/her Christian experience to the Board of Deacons; and shall confess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. If the Deacon Board is satisfied that the candidate is eligible for membership in the church, the Board of Deacons shall so report to the membership and the candidate shall then be required to give personal

testimony before the membership. The candidate shall be accepted into membership by a majority vote of the active members of the church present at that meeting.

SECTION 3. ACTIVE MEMBERS

Only active members are allowed to vote at any church meeting. An active member is one who actively supports the church constitution. He/she must attend at least two Sunday Morning Worship Services each month of the year. An exception may be made by the Deacon Board because of confinement, or other unavoidable causes (e.g. vacation, business trips, students attending out of town schools, etc.)

SECTION 4. DISCIPLINE

The mandate to love one another dictates that any action taken by this church toward an errant member must be corrective in nature rather than punitive. The goal of this church body should be governed by a need to restore the errant member into a proper relationship with God and the church body and a willful obedience to the Word of God rather than to seek punishment.

Should a member become an offense to the church body and to Christ by: reason of immorality or unchristian conduct; persistent breach of the church covenant or vows; or, irreconcilable scriptural differences with the church body which results in dissension or division within the church body - the church will take the following steps leading to discipline in the order as outlined in Matt. 18:15-20:

1. Private rebuke of the member; Matt. 18:15
2. Rebuke of the member in the presence of two or three witnesses; Matt.18:16
3. Public rebuke of the member by the Pastor and Deacon Board before the assembled church body; Matt. 18:17a; 1 Tim. 5:19-20
4. The public refusal to allow the errant member from partaking in Communion or serving in any capacity within the church; Matt. 18:17b
5. The public denial of fellowship with the errant member during the period of church discipline; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 2 Thess. 3:14; Titus 3:10-11
6. The placement of the errant member onto the Inactive Membership List for a period of one year. During this period of time, every effort will be made to bring the errant member to repentance and reconciliation with God and the church body. Failure to do so will result in the termination of church membership at the Bridge of Faith Baptist Church. 2 Cor. 2:5-11; Heb.12:10-11

Anytime during the disciplinary process, prior to termination, the errant member may be restored to full active membership status by displaying fruits of repentance. If the process has remained a private issue, the reinstatement may be made with the approval of the pastor and the Deacon Board. If the process has become a public matter, then the errant member must appear before the assembled body of believers and request reinstatement of his/her membership. After termination, any former member may apply for membership; however, such application must be accompanied by evidence of repentance and approved by a 2/3 majority vote of the assembled church body. A quorum of the active members must be present to conduct any vote of reinstatement."

SECTION 5. INACTIVE MEMBERS

The Deacon Board of this church is hereby authorized to create an INACTIVE MEMBERSHIP LIST comprising those who have not been faithful to their constitutional obligation. Persons placed on this list shall not have the privilege to vote or hold office until reinstated by the Deacon Board. It is understood that the Pastor and the Deacon Board will endeavor to restore and reinstate them to active status.

SECTION 6. DISMISSAL OF MEMBERS

- A. By their own request.
- B. By church letter. An active member may have his letter transferred to another church of like faith and practice.
- C. By erasure for persistent indifference to or antagonism against the church constitution. It is recommended that action on such be delayed for one year, if wise, from the time the member becomes inactive and that the member be clearly informed, *if possible*, of the intended church action.
- D. No member shall be removed from the membership of this church except the recommendation of the Deacon Board and the majority vote of the active members present at a regular business meeting of the church.

SECTION 7. FORFEITURE OF RIGHTS

The members of this church agree that there shall be no appeal to any court because of their dismissal or because of public statements made by the congregation members during the disciplinary process. Members under church discipline forfeit and waive the right to resign their church membership. Only requests for dismissal by members who are in good standing and not under any disciplinary action shall be considered by this church body.

ARTICLE VI. OFFICERS AND BOARDS

SECTION 1. PREREQUISITES AND LIMITATIONS

- A. We believe that the Scriptures (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9) eliminates pastors, deacons and Bible teachers from ministering to the spiritual life of the church if they belong to a secret fraternal society.
- B. No complaint shall be recognized against any member of this church unless in writing, signed by the accuser, and scriptural reasons given to sustain the charges. No charges shall be brought before the Deacon Board unless the steps outlined in Matt. 18:15-17 have been followed without resolution or reconciliation. Any item from a church member for the Deacon Board's consideration must be in writing and signed by its author.
- C. All official records of transactions and titles pertaining to the church is the property of the church and must be kept in a central, permanent, and secure place available for references to any member of the Deacon Board.
- D. Any financial transactions and titles pertaining to the church is the property of the church and must be kept in a central, permanent, and secure place available for references to any member of the Deacon Board.
- E. All members of the Deacon Board, except the Pastor and Assistant Pastor, shall have been an active member of this church for a period of at least one year, unless said person has been shown to be a mature believer in other like ministries upon approval and investigation by the Pastor and the nomination committee, immediately before being placed in nomination Their term of office shall begin and end at the January Deacon Board meeting.

The retiring officers shall meet with the new Deacon Board at the January meeting and be responsible for any reports to the Annual Business Meeting following their term. Other minor offices may be created as they may be deemed necessary. No person shall hold more than one office at one time except by specific vote of the church to fill an office not otherwise able to be filled.

- F. It is expected that all officers of the church and Bible school conduct themselves as good examples of our Lord Jesus Christ by devotional life, Spiritual service and faithfulness to the church and its program.

ARTICLE VII. PASTOR

SECTION 1. CALL

The pastor shall be elected for an indeterminate term. Notice of the proposed choice of a pastor will be given from the pulpit for two (2) successive Sundays preceding the election. Voting shall be by ballot, with 40% of the active members present. A 2/3 majority vote of the members present shall be required for election. He must be willing to conform with this constitution. The time and results of his former ministry to churches must be obtained through sources other than himself.

SECTION 2. TERMINATION

The pastor shall serve until his pastorate is terminated by resignation or by request of the church. The pastor shall give a minimum of thirty (30) days' notice before the termination of this office. In the event that the church - with 40% of the active members present - votes to terminate the Pastor's service, it shall require a 2/3 majority vote by ballot of the active members present. This shall terminate the pastor's service immediately. However, the salary shall continue for thirty (30) days. A meeting called to such a vote shall be announced two (2) weeks previously.

SECTION 3. VACATION

The pastor shall be entitled to a two week vacation each calendar year. The time shall be his option with the Deacon Board's approval. It shall not include more than two Sundays. Any time or activities in which he officially represents the church shall not be counted. After ten (10) consecutive years as Pastor, additional vacation time may be given from year to year by the Deacon Board and if supported by the church. Each additional week (7 days) of vacation shall include one Sunday. The pastor may carry over from year to year only one week (7 days) of vacation.

SECTION 4. PASTOR'S RETIREMENT POLICY

The Bridge of Faith Baptist Church recognizes the needs of our pastor(s) upon retirement. Consequently, being sympathetic to their needs and consistent with our commitments to our pastor(s), we will establish and maintain a retirement policy for our pastor(s). Each year we will contribute a percentage of the pastor's gross salary towards a retirement fund of his choice. This percentage will be determined by the church body and reviewed by the Deacon Board annually. Any proposed changes toward this retirement contribution will be presented to the church body at any regularly scheduled Annual or Quarterly Business meeting for church action.

SECTION 5. PASTOR'S DUTIES

The pastor shall preach the full counsel of God, administer the ordinances of the gospel,

moderate the Deacon Board meetings and shall serve as the moderator at all business meetings of the church. In the event of a vote of confidence on the pastor, the Chairman of the Deacons shall moderate the meeting. The pastor shall be an *ex-officio* member of all committees and boards of this church. In the absence of a pastor, the Chairman of the Deacons shall serve as moderator of the business meetings.

SECTION 6. LICENSING AND ORDINATION

Any male giving evidence of a Divine call to the ministry of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, may be licensed by the ministry of this church. Any male wishing to be ordained: must accept the articles of faith of the GARBC; must accept the constitution and covenant of this church; and, must be recommended by the pastor and/or Deacon Board of this church. The ordination council, composed of ordained pastors selected or approved by the pastor or Deacon board, shall thoroughly examine the candidate in regard to his doctrinal soundness, moral and spiritual qualifications and personal fitness for the ministry. Upon satisfactory examination by the council, he shall be recommended to the church for ordination. The candidate's ordination shall require ratification of the recommendation of the ordination council by the members of the church body.

ARTICLE VIII. OFFICERS

SECTION 1. DEACONS

- A. The church shall elect from its membership at the December Election meeting the required number of men to serve as Deacons. Their terms shall be for three (3) years and arranged to end consecutively. One (1) deacon shall be elected for every fifty (50) members or a majority fraction thereof. In any event, however, the minimum number shall not be less than three (3) or four (4) qualified men. They shall elect a secretary from their numbers.
- B. The qualification for Deacons shall be such as are described and set forth in the New Testament. (1 Tim. 3:8-13; Acts 6:3)
- C. It shall be the duties of the Deacons to:
 1. Assist in serving the Lord's Supper.
 2. Assist the pastor in administering baptism, in fully examining all candidates for membership and recommending all they consider eligible for church membership.
 3. The Board of Deacons shall constitute the Pulpit Committee.
 4. It shall conduct the general business of the church. It shall make financial expenditures not to exceed \$1000.00 without the consent of the church body.
 5. They shall select the following officers: Chairman of the Board of Deacons and Trustees; Song Leader; Head Usher; Musician; Assistant Musician; Assistant Treasurer; and, Youth Leaders who shall serve until relieved by the Deacon Board. They shall appoint needed officers to fill unexpired terms.
 6. They shall appoint a Nomination Committee to prepare a slate of officers for the December Election meeting.
 7. The Deacon Board shall conduct regular monthly meetings. Such meetings shall always proceed the Quarterly Business meetings and the Annual Business meeting in January. The exact day and time of the Deacon Board meetings are optional pending approval of the entire Deacon Board.
 8. Deacon Board members are *required* to be faithful in attendance at all Deacon Board meetings. Each member will be allowed to miss up to two (2) regularly scheduled Deacon Board meetings annually. People unable to comply with

these requirements *should not* be encouraged to run for a Deacon Board position OR should be asked to relinquish an existing position.

SECTION 2. TRUSTEES

- A. The church shall elect from its membership the required number of persons at its December Election meeting to serve as Trustees. Their terms of office shall be for three (3) years arranged to end consecutively. At least one (1) Trustee shall be elected for every fifty (50) members, or the majority fraction thereof. In any event, however, the minimum shall not be less than three (3) persons.
- B. It shall be the duties of the Trustees to care for the property of the church. To hold, repair, invest and preserve the same, including the hiring and supervision of the Janitor; to superintend any improvements not entrusted to special committees; and to perform such business concerns of the church as shall from time to time be assigned to them by the leadership. The Trustees are at all times servants of the church and subject to its corporate action.
- C. The Trustees shall not have the authority to sell, lease, give away or dispose of church property in any manner except as advised by the church body. They are, however, to be allowed to spend up to \$250.00 for maintenance and repair without the approval of the Deacon Board.
- D. The Chairman of the Trustee Board shall report all monthly activities of the Trustee Board to the Deacon Board in person or a written report at the monthly Deacon Board's Meeting.

SECTION 3. CHURCH TREASURER

At the December Election meeting the church shall elect from its membership a Treasurer for a period of one (1) year. He/she shall receive all local funds of the church and mission funds and apply the same as directed by the Deacon Board; and keep a true and fair record of accounts. He/she shall make a monthly report to the Deacon Board and a written annual report to the church. The Treasurer's books must be audited annually by one or more appointed by the Deacon Board prior to the Annual Church Business meeting.

SECTION 4. FINANCIAL SECRETARY

The Financial Secretary will be appointed by the Deacon Board as needed. Due to the sensitivity of the information, this appointment shall be for an indefinite period of time. The appointee may be replaced by the Deacon Board upon request or for failure to perform the duties of the position. The Financial Secretary shall keep an accurate record of all personal giving to the church and to prepare a statement reflecting such giving annually. Statements shall be distributed to all contributors by January 15 of the following calendar year.

SECTION 5. CLERK

The church shall elect from its membership at the December Election meeting a Clerk for a period of one (1) year. He/she shall keep fair and complete record of the proceedings of the church; have charge of all records; keep a register of all members of the church; and, write letters of dismissal. The Clerk shall give notice of church business when so directed by the Deacon Board and perform such other particular duties as may be prescribed by the church.

SECTION 6. DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The church shall elect from its membership at the December Election meeting a Director of Christian Education for a period of three (3) years. Working in close cooperation with the Pastor, this individual shall be in charge of the administration and promotion of the Sunday School classes, Children's Church and Vacation Bible School. This individual shall chair a Christian Education Committee which shall meet as it deems necessary. The committee shall be comprised of the Chairman of the Deacon Board, the Director of Christian Education as well as the Awana Commander, VBS director, an at-large Sunday School teacher and the Christmas play director - each to be appointed by the Deacon Board. This committee shall be empowered to secure proper teachers for the various classes, examine the curriculum to be used and ensure that Biblical standards are maintained in all aspects of education. This committee shall further approve the selection of the Christmas play annually. They may suggest changes in the curriculum whenever deemed necessary and submit them to the Pastor and the Deacon Board. The final decision of any curriculum changes will ultimately be determined by the Pastor and the Deacon Board.

SECTION 7. MISSIONARY SECRETARY

The church shall elect from its membership at the December Election meeting a Missionary Secretary for a period of one (1) year. He/she shall maintain regular correspondence with the missionaries approved by the church. He/she shall make a written annual report to the church at the Annual Meeting.

SECTION 8. SOCIAL COMMITTEE

The Social Committee shall consist of four (4) members elected for a period of two (2) years. Two (2) shall be elected each year. They shall oversee the kitchen and social gatherings of the church. They shall be elected from the membership at the December Election meeting.

SECTION 9. DEACONESSES

There shall be three (3) Deaconesses elected for a period of three (3) years, one (1) elected each year. They shall aid the pastor and the Deacons in administering to the spiritual welfare of the sick and needy. They shall prepare the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. They shall arrange for the entertainment of visiting speakers and groups. They shall assist in baptismal services. They shall be elected from the membership at the December Election meeting.

Article IX. NOMINATION COMMITTEE

Prior to the December Election meeting of the church, the Deacon Board shall appoint a chairman from the Deacon Board and at least three (3) other members representing major boards or services of the church. They shall be responsible for the preparation, distribution, collection and tabulation of a primary write-in Nomination Ballot. They shall be issued by November 1st and collected by November 20th immediately preceding the election. This committee shall determine, with the help of the Church Clerk, the eligibility and availability of each candidate. They shall select the three (3) highest - if possible - nominations for each office to be filled and list them in alphabetical order. They shall give a copy of this list to the Chairman before the December Election meeting. At the election, the candidates' names shall be made public; a secret ballot taken and counted; and, the results announced immediately. Any problems arising shall be resolved by the

retiring Deacon Board.

ARTICLE X. BUSINESS MEETINGS

SECTION 1. SUGGESTED OUTLINE

- A. Scripture read, hymn, prayer by-Leadership.
- B. Meeting called to order by the chairman
- C. Minutes of previous meeting read and passed.
- D. Reports summarized or distributed by all officers involved.
- E. Dismissal of all non-Deacon officers.
- E. Deacons shall address all unfinished business followed by New business.
- F. Adjournment and prayer.

SECTION 2. ANNUAL DECEMBER ELECTION MEETING

There shall be an Annual Election meeting of the church during the month of December for the purpose of electing the officers of the church whose tenure ends on December 31st. Notice of such meeting shall be given from the pulpit on the two preceding Sundays.

SECTION 3. ANNUAL CHURCH BUSINESS MEETING

The Annual Church Business meeting is to be held during the month of January following the regularly scheduled Deacon Board meeting. Notice of such meeting shall be given from the pulpit on the two preceding Sundays.

SECTION 4. QUARTERLY BUSINESS MEETINGS

The Quarterly Business meetings of this church shall be held during the months of April, July and October. The day and time of the meeting shall be at the discretion of the pastor and the Deacon Board. At these meetings, an update of the prior quarter's transaction of business shall be presented to the church body. Notice of such meeting shall be given from the pulpit on the two preceding Sundays.

SECTION 5. SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETINGS

A special business meeting of the church may be called by the pastor or clerk at the request of the majority of the Deacon Board or by at least ten (10) members of the church consisting of at least 5 families. In the event a meeting is called by the members, notice shall be provided to the pastor at least two weeks prior to the meeting. Notice shall be given publicly from the pulpit on the Lord's Day preceding.

ARTICLE XI. VOTING MEMBERS

- A. Only active members of the church 16 years of age and over may vote or speak at the meetings for the transaction of the business of the church. A majority vote shall be sufficient to carry any motion except where otherwise stipulated in this constitution.
- B. Robert's Parliamentary Rules of Order shall govern this body in all parliamentary procedure.
- C. Quorum means 10% of active voting members of the church must be present to make the church meeting official.

ARTICLE XII. COMMUNION

Communion shall be observed once a month subject to change by the pastor with the consent of the Deacon Board.

ARTICLE XIII. AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended at the Annual Church Business meeting by a 2/3 majority vote of the active members present. Notice must be given in writing two weeks previous to this meeting.

ARTICLE XIV. USE OF CHURCH PROPERTY

All Bridge of Faith Baptist Church's property and facilities (including furniture, fixtures, and equipment) are holy and set apart to worship God, regardless of the location of the facility. (Colossians 3:17). Bridge of Faith Baptist Church's facilities are consecrated to our religious ministry and mission because they are a provision from God. Use of Bridge of Faith Baptist Church's property shall be for the propagation of the Christian faith, for fellowship, witnessing, religious teaching, and charity. Therefore, all use and occupancy of Bridge of Faith Baptist Church's property shall be limited to persons of our particular religion, the propagation of religion, or related religious purposes.

All activities on church property must cohere with the religious purpose of Bridge of Faith Baptist Church and further its Christian mission, whether the activity has an overt liturgical religious purpose (preaching, worship services, Bible instruction, communion, baptism) or a non-liturgical religious purpose (social service, mentorship, community service, benevolence, charity, schools). Bridge of Faith Baptist Church conducts all activities in order to advance or express its Christian mission, message and viewpoint. Church facility use shall be exclusively conditioned on whether the use promotes Bridge of Faith Baptist Church's mission, message and viewpoint, as all facility usage is an opportunity to glorify God. In addition, church property is exclusively reserved for persons and organizations who agree to abide by Bridge of Faith Baptist Church's Constitution (the "Written Statements of Faith"), which are incorporated herein by reference, as if fully set forth herein.

Likewise, Bridge of Faith Baptist Church facilities are not generally open to the public and may not be used by persons or groups holding, advancing, or advocating beliefs that conflict with the Bridge of Faith Baptist Church's faith or moral teachings – including but not limited to Bridge of Faith Baptist Church's Written Statements of Faith, which are incorporated herein by reference, as if fully set forth herein.

Any facilities that are made available to approved non-members for usage are meant to further the Bridge of Faith Baptist Church's calling to minister to others, in the vein of charity and witnessing to our faith. For this reason, Bridge of Faith Baptist Church's property cannot be used for purposes that contradict the church's beliefs, which would constitute a grave violation of the Church's faith and religious practice, as well as degrade the Church's religious integrity. (II Corinthians 6:3; and 14; I Thessalonians 5:22.)

Bridge of Faith Baptist Church is a non-profit corporation. No church property or facilities shall be used for the purpose of making money or used by groups holding views and practices inconsistent with our Church Covenant. No speaker shall be allowed to speak from the platform of the church who denies any of its Articles of Faith. Because the facility is

exclusively utilized for religious and ministry purposes, it may be reserved for a fee. The fee is intended to be used for general maintenance and cleaning of church facilities.

ARTICLE XV. DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY

In the providence of God - should this church dissolve - all property, personal and real, all titles, deeds, etc. shall be transferred as a gift to Camp Fairwood of Westfield, Wisconsin and Shepherds Baptist Ministries of Union Grove, Wisconsin in an equal division. The estate shall be administered by the Council of Eight of the Wisconsin Association of Regular Baptist Churches.

ARTICLE XVI. MISSIONS

A Missionary is one sent out by the local church or churches for the purpose of winning the lost souls to Christ. He or she should represent the local church's doctrine and policy. We state here our policy:

We interpret the phrase, "Fellowship with the G.A.R.B.C., as found in Article IV in this constitution to mean: *that any individual or group requesting official recognition, encouragement, or gifts from this church must first conform to the same Biblical standards and policies as the G.A.R.B.C.* Furthermore, all money given through this church for a missionary invited by the Deacon Board must be collected through a general offering and go through the designated missionary's mission board. A missionary's travel and other expenses incurred in visiting this church shall be borne by the church and not be considered part of its gift to missionary or the board. The article does not apply to present missionaries not supported by the church.

January 22, 1975 as amended on January 2001. (NOTE: We recommend reading: *If I Were Choosing a Mission Board* by J.B. Williams, Mid-Missions)

ARTICLE XVII. BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

SECTION 1. AUTHORITY

The Bible is the only authority under God for faith and practice. It is verbally and plenary inspired by God in its original transcripts. We do not accept the Apocryphal books. (1 Tim. 3:16, 2 Pet. 1:21)

SECTION 2. THE LOCAL CHURCH

- A. Jesus Christ is its sovereign founder and head. Its regulations are written in the New Testament (Matt. 16:18; Col. 1:17-19).
- B. It has two essential officers - Pastor and Deacon. (1 Tim. 3:1-6)
- C. It is composed of regenerate, orderly, immersed believers. (Acts 2:37-47, 1 Cor. 5)
- D. It is a separate institution from but within the state. (Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13)
- E. It is theocratic, autonomous, congregational (all members equal), and missionary. (1 Cor. 5:4,12,13; Acts 13:1-5, Acts 6:2-6; Matt.28:16-20, Matt. 23:8-12)
- F. It is pure in doctrine, practice and affiliation. (Eph. 5:26,27; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1)
- G. It has only two ordinances - *not sacramental*: Immersion and Communion, and in that order of obedience. (Acts 2:27-47)
- H. Its financial plan is by tithes and offerings. (1 Cor. 9:4,16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7)
- I. Its weapons of warfare are spiritual and not carnal. (2 Cor.10:4 Eph. 6:10-20)

SECTION 3. CHURCH MEMBERS

- A. By grace through faith believers are eternally united to Christ and one another by the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 1:13, 2:8-10; 2 Cor. 12:11-13)

- B. All believers are priests. All have direct access to God through Christ. (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 10:19-25; 1 Pet. 2:5-9)
- C. All believers are free to worship God as they understand the Scriptures, led by the Holy Spirit and their conscience but limited by others liberty. (Acts 5:29; Rom. 14; 1 John 2:29; John 4:23-24) NOTE: We recommend reading: Hiscox, *New Directory of Baptist Churches* and Carroll, *Trail of Blood*.

ARTICLE XVIII. OF THE FAMILY

We believe:

- A. That marriage can only be recognized as the union between one man and one woman as defined by scripture. This is the only model for the institution of marriage that is consistent with God’s plan and sacred in His sight. (Gen. 1:26-28; Gen. 2:18-25; Mal. 2:13-14; Matt. 19:3-9; Eph. 5:18-32; 1 Tim.3:4,5,12)
- B. That sexual relationships are sacred and fulfilling only with the bonds of marriage and is condemned outside the marriage relationship. (1 Cor. 7:3-4; Heb. 13:4)
 - 1. Sexual Immorality — We believe that certain sexual acts immoral and prohibited as sinful. Consequently, Church members must resist and refrain from any and all sexual acts outside marriage — including but not limited to adultery, fornication, incest, zoophilia, pornography, prostitution, masturbation, voyeurism, pedophilia, exhibitionism, sodomy, polygamy, polyamory, sologamy, or same-sex sexual acts. (Exodus 20:14, Leviticus 18:7-23, Leviticus 20:10-21, Deuteronomy 5:18, Matthew 15:19, Matthew 5:27-28, Matthew 15:19, Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-13, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Hebrews 13:4, Galatians 5:19, Ephesians 4:17-19, Colossians 3:5)
 - 2. Sexual Identity — We believe that God created mankind in His image: male (man) and female (woman), sexually different but with equal personal dignity. Consequently, Church members must affirm their biological sex and refrain from any and all attempts to physically change, alter, or disagree with their predominant biological sex — including but not limited to elective sex-reassignment, transvestite, transgender, or non-binary “genderqueer” acts or conduct. (Genesis 1:26-28, Romans 1:26-32, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11)
 - 3. Sexual Orientation — We believe that God created and ordered human sexuality to the permanent, exclusive, comprehensive, and conjugal “one flesh” union of man and woman, intrinsically ordered to procreation and biological family, and in furtherance of the moral, spiritual, and public good of binding father, mother, and child. Consequently, Church members must affirm the sexual complementarity of man and woman and resist any and all same-sex sexual attractions and refrain from any and all same-sex sexual acts or conduct, which are intrinsically disordered. (Genesis 1:27, Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-6, Mark 10:5-9, Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Ephesians 5:25-27, Revelation 19:7-9, Revelation 21:2)
 - 4. Celibacy — We believe that Holy Scripture grants two life-enhancing options for human sexual behavior: (1) the conjugal “one flesh” marital union of one man and one woman, and (2) celibacy. Either is a gift from God, given as He wills for His glory and the good of those who receive and rejoice in His gift to them. Celibacy and faithful singleness is to be celebrated and affirmed within the Church. (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18, 21-24; Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:5-8; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Corinthians 7:1-8; Matthew 19:12; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Romans 12:10; 1 Timothy 5:1-2)

- C. That children are a blessing of God and the responsibility for them rests solely upon the parents and they are to be brought up in loving structured control and
- D. That the roles of husband, wife, parent and child are clearly defined in Scripture. (Eph. 5: 21-32; Col. 3: 16-21; 1 Pet. 3:1-7)
- E. Conscientious instruction in the truths of God and His principles of life. (Deut.6: 6-7; Ps.78: 4-7; Ps.127:3; Prov.17:6; Prov.22:6; Eph. 6:4)

ARTICLE XIX. MARRIAGE, DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

- A. We are for celibacy and marriage and opposed to divorce. (Matt.19: 3-9)
- B. Where separation or divorce has occurred, our only Biblical counsel should be for reconciliation, provided neither one has remarried someone else. (1 Cor. 7:10-11)
- C. This church will not marry or host any marriage when two parties – both making professions of faith - become divorced and choose to remarry. All other requests to be remarried in our church will be at the discretion of the pastor and the Deacon Board. Any decisions rendered must be accompanied by prayer and comply with scriptural teachings.” (Mal. 2:16; Matt. 5:31-32,19: 5-8; Mark 10:10-12, Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:10-24)
- D. Any divorce that occurs in the life of a member of the Bridge of Faith Baptist Church, after becoming a member, shall be turned over to the Deacons and Pastor to study in regard to church discipline.
- E. To those non-members divorced and/or remarried, seeking fellowship with us, we affirm our love and acceptance.