

Woodland Shores Baptist Church

Constitution

Approved by the Board of Deacons: November 13, 2011
Adopted by the congregation: December 4, 2011

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Article I – Name & Purpose

1.1 Name and Affiliation

This religious, non-profit organization incorporated under the laws of the State of Michigan is known as Woodland Shores Baptist Church (WSBC). The government of the church is vested in its members. This church is autonomous and is not subject to any ecclesiastical organization. It is affiliated with the Great Lakes Association of the North American Baptist (NAB) Conference. It recognizes and maintains cooperation with other churches and organizations in areas of mutual interest.

1.2 Statement of Faith

We accept the NAB Statement of Beliefs¹ as the WSBC Statement of Faith - see Addendum A on page 11.

1.3 Purpose

Glorify God by helping as many as possible become fully-committed followers of Christ.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we express full commitment to Christ in our...

Hunger for God's Word

"When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty." Jeremiah 15.16 (NIV)

"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good." 1 Peter 2.2-3 (NIV)

Passionate worship

"God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." John 4.24 (NIV)

"...Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind." Luke 10.27a (NIV)

Fervent prayer

"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4.6-7 (NLT)

"...The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results." James 5.16 (NLT)

Generous giving

"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9.6-7 (NIV)

¹ North American Baptist Conference Statement of Beliefs adopted August 10-15, 1982, amended July 15-19, 2009.

“If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.” I John 3.17-18 (NIV)

Sacrificial service

“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.” John 13.14-17 (NIV)

“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” John 15.13 (NIV)

Genuine love for one another

“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” John 13.34-35 (NLT)

“Don't just pretend to love others. Really love...with genuine affection...” Romans 12.9-10 (NLT)

Active witness for Christ

“...go and make disciples of all nations...” Matthew 28.19 (NIV)

“...As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” John 20.21 (NIV)

Article II – Members

2.1 Church Covenant

By God's grace and to the best of our ability we will:

Share in the life and responsibility of this church...

- By faithfully participating in public worship, biblical teaching, communion, and baptism
- By praying for one another
- By following scriptural standards of purity, integrity, and sound doctrine

By God's grace and to the best of our ability we will:

Serve in the ministry of this church...

- By using our gifts and talents to serve others in the name of Christ
- By rejoicing in each other's happiness, and bearing each other's burdens
- By reaching out to non-Christians and unchurched people

By God's grace and to the best of our ability we will:

Protect the unity of this church...

- By walking together in brotherly love and in the spirit of unity
- By giving full support to our Statement of Faith, Church Covenant, and Constitution
- By following the scriptural-based leadership of our pastoral staff and church leaders

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of God's Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

2.2 Membership

Eligibility

Any person who confesses Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, is baptized by immersion, and subscribes to the Statement of Faith and the Church Covenant, may proceed towards membership.

Entrance

Complete the "Membership Admissions Procedure"² and be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the WSBC Board of Deacons.

Exit

- By death.
- By erasure - reasons for erasure from membership:
 - Request of the member.
 - Inactivity for one (1) year or more, except for reasons of health and other reasonable causes.
 - Church cannot contact member after one (1) year or more.
 - Junior Member reaches the age of eighteen (18).
 - Church discipline.

Restoration of Membership

A person whose membership was erased (see above) may request of the Board of Deacons to be restored to membership upon resolution of the cause for erasure.³

Review of Membership Roll

The membership roll shall be reviewed by Pastoral Staff and/or Board of Deacons on an annual basis.⁴

2.3 Types of Members

Participating Member

A Participating Member is a member in good standing, eighteen (18) or above in age, and has full voting rights.

Associate Member

An Associate Member has been inactive in attendance and/or financial support for more than a year. They no longer have voting privileges.

Junior Member

A Junior Member is under the age of eighteen (18) with no voting privileges. Upon reaching the age of eighteen (18), Junior membership ends. However, they are encouraged to become a Participating Member by following the membership process.

² Found in the WSBC Policies and Procedures Manual.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Found in the WSBC Policies and Procedures Manual.

2.4 Grievances/Discipline of Members

The resolution of grievances and discipline shall be addressed in the following manner, always with the goal of reconciliation in view. (Galatians 6.1)

Reviewed Privately and then with Witnesses

Should any grievance arise between members, it shall be approached in a tender spirit of love following the instruction of our Lord in Matthew 18.15-16 with reconciliation in mind.

Reviewed by Senior Pastor and Board of Deacons on Behalf of the Congregation

Should reconciliation fail with the aid of witnesses (Matthew 18.16), the complaint shall then be brought to the Senior Pastor and the WSBC Board of Deacons, who shall endeavor to resolve the offense.

Discipline

All proceedings shall be conducted in the spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance. Should an adverse decision be reached, the church may discipline the person. The action may range from admonishing to removal of said person from the church membership (Matthew 18.17b). A decision to remove a person from membership of WSBC requires a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Board of Deacons at a duly-called meeting.

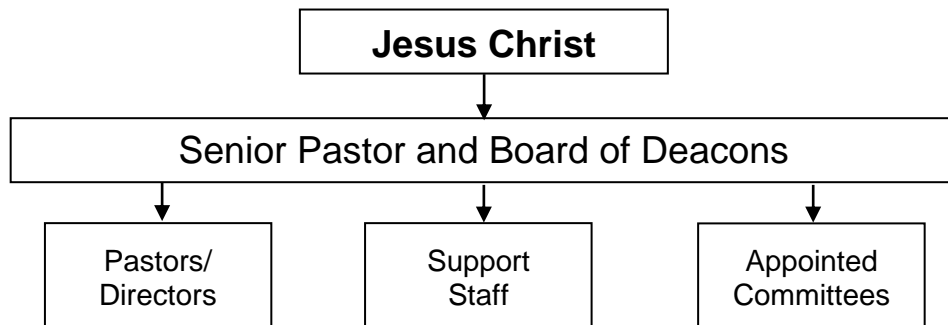
Article III – Church Government Structure, Roles, and Responsibilities

3.1 Congregation

The voting membership of WSBC is the recognized congregation that has the final level of accountability within the church structure. This congregation is responsible to:

- Elect members to the Board of Deacons, Nominating Committee, and Senior Pastor Search Committee
- Oversee Standing Committees
- Transact real property
- Amend the Constitution or Statement of Faith
- Adopt budgets
- Extend calls to or dismiss the Senior Pastor
- Decide to move, build, or significantly remodel facilities
- Incur indebtedness
- Dissolve the church

3.2 Leadership is organized as follows:



3.3 Board of Deacons - Membership, Roles, and Responsibilities

Qualifications

The qualifications for membership on the Board of Deacons are set forth in 1 Timothy 3.1-13, Acts 6.3, and Titus 1.5-9. A Board of Deacon member shall also be a Participating Member of WSBC.

Membership

The Board of Deacons consists of no less than seven (7) and no more than twelve (12) members. The Senior Pastor is an ex-officio voting member of the Board. The Board of Deacons' members are elected by the congregation for a two (2) year term. Board members may serve a maximum of three (3) sequential full terms. They shall again be eligible for election after a one (1) year period. These terms will be arranged to provide an even rotation of the Board of Deacons' members. Should it become necessary, the congregation may, with the agreement of the Board of Deacons' member, lengthen a term by a year to restore the orderly rotation of membership. If there is a vacancy, the Board may appoint a new Board member to serve until the next election. One (1) ordained member of the Pastoral Staff shall be an ex-officio member of the Board of Deacons with voting privileges. This position will rotate among the Pastoral Staff on an annual basis. All other members of the Pastoral Staff may participate on the Board of Deacons as non-voting members.

Structure

The Board of Deacons will elect from their membership a Chair and a Secretary. They may elect an Associate Chair at their discretion.

Roles & Responsibilities

The Board of Deacons is responsible to assist the Senior Pastor and Pastoral Staff in providing leadership to the congregation, and to seek, articulate, and enable the congregation's vision for ministry by:

- Developing short, medium, and long-range plans.
- Creating and dissolving committees to carry out the congregation's vision.
- Appointing members to appointed committees.
- Reviewing the work of all committees.
- Approving changes of congregational membership status (see section 2.2).
- Approving baptismal candidates.
- Developing and implementing church policy.
- Approving policy and procedures of the appointed committees.
- Carrying out discipline, in accordance with the Constitution, with aim of restoration.
- Appointing other committees as they are deemed necessary.
- Reviewing and recommending annual budgets to the congregation.
- Adjusting budget by +/-10% of the approved annual budget.
- Gathering congregational input on church direction and specific issues facing the body.
- Reporting the activities of the Board to the congregation.

3.4 Appointed Committees

From time to time, the Board of Deacons may establish Appointed Committees, such as Administration, Audit, Finance and Global Missions, to provide closer oversight to an area of church business or ministry. Appointed Committees are responsible to carry out specifically

assigned tasks and provide input to the Board of Deacons for the vision and purpose in their respective area. Appointed Committees may be dissolved once the particular need has been met and/or the need for the Committee no longer exists.

Membership

Each Committee will consist of no fewer than five (5), except Auditing may be as few as three (3), and no more than twelve (12) WSBC Participating Members. The Board of Deacons appoints the Committee members annually. If a Committee Member is not a Participating Member, they must sign, showing their agreement with the WSBC Statement of Faith and Church Covenant, and they have no committee voting rights.

Structure

Each Appointed Committee shall elect a chair and may, at their discretion, elect other positions, as they deem appropriate.

Role & Responsibilities

The Board of Deacons establishes the Committee's membership, structure, roles, and responsibilities. The chair of any Appointed Committee and a majority of Committee members must be Participating Members of WSBC. Any non-Participating Member shall sign agreement with WSBC's Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. The Committee reports to the Board of Deacons.

3.5 Standing Committees

There will be two (2) standing committees with direct accountability to the WSBC voting membership:

1. Nominating Committee
2. Senior Pastor Search Committee

Nominating Committee

Membership and Structure

The Nominating Committee shall be established and consist of the Senior Pastor, Board of Deacons' Chair, and three (3) Participating Members elected by the congregation for a one (1) year term. Recommendations for membership to the Nominating Committee shall be made by the WSBC Participating membership. Nominating Committee members, elected from the congregation, may serve a maximum of two (2) sequential full terms. They shall again be eligible for election after a one (1) year period. If there is a vacancy, the Board of Deacons may appoint a Participating Member to serve until the next election. One of the members elected by the congregation shall serve as Chair.

Roles & Responsibilities

They shall recommend to the congregation candidates for the Board of Deacons and all standing committees. The Nominating Committee's responsibilities include:

- Receiving recommendations for the various positions.
- Conducting interviews.
- Making nominations at congregational meetings.

Senior Pastor Search Committee

When it becomes necessary to fill the position of Senior Pastor, a Senior Pastor Search Committee shall be established.

Membership and Structure

It shall be composed of no less than five (5) and no more than twelve (12) Participating Members, presented by the Nominating Committee, and elected by the congregation. A Senior Pastor Search Committee shall elect a Chair. The term for membership shall be until the position is filled.

Responsibilities - see the WSBC Policies and Procedures Manual

Article IV - Officers and Church Staff

4.1 Corporate Officers

There will be four (4) Corporate Officers: 1) President, 2) Vice President, 3) Secretary, and 4) Treasurer. These Corporate Officers shall act for the congregation as legal representatives of the church, in accordance with the laws of the State of Michigan, the Constitution, and church policy. Resignation, removal, and replacement of these officers shall be handled by the Board of Deacons.

President

The Chair of the Board of Deacons shall serve as President, Moderator, and Resident Agent and shall be elected by the Board of Deacons' members. The Moderator shall preside over the congregational business meetings.

Vice President

The Board of Deacons shall elect one of its members to serve as Vice President.

Secretary

The Secretary of the Board of Deacons shall be elected by the Board of Deacons and shall serve as Secretary of the Corporation and shall ensure that the following take place: 1) accurate minutes of the business meetings are kept, 2) minutes of the business meetings are reported to the congregation, and 3) a quorum is verified when required.

Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be appointed by the Board of Deacons for a two (2) year term. He shall be a Participating Member of WSBC. The Treasurer shall be responsible for all church monies, and making and approving disbursements. A financial statement shall be presented at business meetings and as requested by the Board of Deacons. The Treasurer may not serve on the Auditing Committee.

A pastor elected as a Corporate Officer will be restricted from having signing authority on the corporation's bank accounts.

4.2 Church Staff

Pastors/Directors

Pastors/Directors are those who are engaged in the direction of ministries of our congregation. They normally will have specific training for church ministry.

Qualifications

Pastors/Directors shall meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and be in agreement with the WSBC Statement of Beliefs, the WSBC Constitution, and WSBC Church Covenant.

Senior Pastor

Calling

- The call of a Senior Pastor shall come before the church at a duly-called business meeting.
- A two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Participating Members present at a duly-called church business meeting is required for a call. A Senior Pastor shall serve for an indefinite term.
- Compensation and benefits will be determined by the Board of Deacons and approved by the congregation.
- Only one (1) candidate will be presented to the church at a time.
- The vote shall be by written ballot.

Dismissal

- The Senior Pastor shall continue in office as long as both parties are agreed.
- The Senior Pastor may be dismissed by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Participating Members present at a duly-called church business meeting.
- If dismissed, the Senior Pastor shall be provided six (6) weeks formal written notice. The Senior Pastor may resign at any time by giving the church one (1) month formal written notice of his intention to resign. However, in either case, the time may be shortened by mutual agreement between the Board of Deacons and the Senior Pastor.
- Separation compensation will be determined by the Board of Deacons.

Responsibilities

The Senior Pastor as the spiritual leader of the church and undershepherd of the Lord Jesus Christ, shall:

- Work with the Board of Deacons and the congregation to set the vision of WSBC.
- Provide leadership to the church in setting objectives, developing other leaders, and the overall welfare of WSBC's members.
- Supervise and mentor, directly or indirectly, the other Pastors, Directors, and Support Staff.
- Function as the primary preacher / teacher for the congregation.
- Act as the primary liaison with our denomination, our association, other churches and the larger community.
- Be an ex-officio member of the Board of Deacons with voting privileges.

Pastors/Directors

Pastors/Directors shall have specific job descriptions and titles.

Calling

As the needs of the church change, additional Pastors/Directors may be needed. These positions will be established and filled by the Senior Pastor, agreed to by the Board of Deacons and approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Participating Members present at a duly called church business meeting.

Dismissal

Dismissal of a Pastor/Director may be done by the Senior Pastor with approval of the Board of Deacons.

Responsibilities

- Shall be directly responsible to the Senior Pastor.
- In addition to the Senior Pastor, an additional ordained Pastor shall be an ex-officio member of the Board of Deacons with voting privileges. This position may be rotated on an annual basis. All other members of the Pastoral Staff may participate in the Board of Deacons as non-voting members.

Support Staff

The church may engage Support Staff as necessary to support the work of its Pastors/Directors, church ministries, and facilities as directed by the Pastors/Directors. These individuals are responsible to the Senior Pastor or individual identified by the Senior Pastor. Each support staff job will have a specific job description.

Hiring will be conducted by the Senior Pastor with appropriate reports made to the Board of Deacons. Potential dismissal will be conducted by the Senior Pastor in consultation with the Board of Deacons. Anyone hired as a Support Staff person will sign their agreement with the Church's Statement of Faith and Church Covenant.

Article V - Administration

5.1 Business Meetings

Business shall be transacted only as prescribed by this Constitution.

Congregational Business Meetings

There shall be a minimum of one (1) meeting each year to conduct elections and adopt a budget.

Agenda items seeking action shall be submitted to the Board of Deacons. Notice of the business meeting, stating the purpose and nature of the business to be acted upon, must be given from the pulpit on two (2) successive Sundays covering a minimum of ten (10) days. No business other than that stated can be conducted during the session. Copies of the proposed budget and reports shall be made available one (1) week before the appropriate business meeting.

Special Business Meetings

Special business meetings may be called by the Board of Deacons or by ten percent (10%) of the Participating membership. Notice must be given from the pulpit on two (2) successive Sundays covering a minimum of ten (10) days, along with the purpose and nature of the business to be transacted. No business other than that stated can be conducted during the session.

Congregation Quorum

Ten percent (10%) of the Participating Members of WSBC, not counting the Pastoral Staff and the Board of Deacons present, shall constitute a quorum to vote on all matters. A simple majority vote in the affirmative shall be necessary to carry any motion, unless otherwise stated in this Constitution.

Rules of Order

The Spirit of Christ shall be observed in all discussions and sessions in the church, the Board of Deacons, and all committees.

5.2 Amendments to the Constitution

Recommended changes must be brought before the church for approval.

This constitution may be amended at any regular interval or called business meeting of the church by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Participating Members present, provided a quorum is present and voting.

5.3 Miscellaneous

Quorum for Board of Deacons

Fifty percent (50%) of the Board of Deacons shall constitute a quorum to vote on all matters and a simple majority vote in the affirmative shall be necessary to carry any motion, unless otherwise stated in this Constitution.

Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures shall be established regarding various activities and ministries. They will not be listed as part of the Constitution, but will be documented in the WSBC Policies and Procedures Manual.

Property

The title to all property of the church, both real and personal, will be vested in that portion of the Participating Members of WSBC that remains faithful to the original purpose of the church.

The title and powers in relation to all property, whether real, personal, or mixed, will be as provided by law in Section 183, Article No. 327, Public Acts of 1931, as amended, of the State of Michigan.

In the event of the dissolution of the organization, no part of the assets or earnings shall inure to the benefit of any member. Upon dissolution, the Board of Deacons is instructed to transfer any and all assets of the organization to the North American Baptist Conference.

Addendum A - NAB Statement of Beliefs Document



North American Baptist Conference Statement of Beliefs

Preface

Baptists, since their beginnings, repeatedly have composed confessions, which expressed the doctrinal consensus among related churches. In principle, however, Baptists always have insisted that no statement of faith can be considered creedally binding even upon concurring congregations. The purpose of their doctrinal summaries was to explain to other Christians and to the larger society what Baptists believed and practiced. Within and among Baptist churches, statements of faith also provided a standard for instruction, counsel and fellowship.

We, as the North American Baptist Conference, presently feel the need to state more fully our Baptist understanding of the Christian faith. The purpose that guided us in writing and the use that we intend for this declaration are to:

1. further the sense of identity and the spirit of unity within our North American Baptist Conference by declaring our common doctrinal understanding
2. provide a basis for doctrinal instruction within our conference
3. provide a basis for doctrinal discussions in the hiring of conference personnel
4. serve as a reference point when opinions differ
5. provide a basis for doctrinal discussion in admitting new churches and new pastors into our various associations
6. provide a doctrinal guide for new churches
7. give a doctrinal witness beyond our conference

In continuity with our immediate forefathers and the larger fellowship of Baptists throughout history, we seek to practice and propagate by God's grace the following convictions:

1. We believe the Bible is God's Word given by divine inspiration, the record of God's revelation of Himself to humanity (II Timothy 3:16). It is trustworthy, sufficient, without error—the supreme authority and guide for all doctrine and conduct (I Peter 1:23-25; John 17:17; II Timothy 3:16-17.) It is the truth by which God brings people into a saving relationship with Himself and leads them to Christian maturity (John 20:31, I John 5:9-12; Matthew 4:4; I Peter 2:2).

2. We believe in the one living and true God, perfect in wisdom, sovereignty, holiness, justice, mercy and love (I Timothy 1:17; Psalm 86:15; Deuteronomy 32:3-4). He exists eternally in three coequal persons who act together in creation, providence and redemption (Genesis 1:26; I Peter 1:2; Hebrews 1:1-3).

- a. The Father reigns with providential care over all life and history in the created universe. He hears and answers prayer (I Chronicles 29:11-13; Matthew 7:11). He initiated salvation by sending His Son, and He is Father to those who by faith accept His Son as Lord and Savior (I John 4:9-10; John 3:16; John 1:12; Acts 16:31).
- b. The Son became man, Jesus Christ, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary (John 1:14; Matthew 1:18). Being fully God and fully man, He revealed God through His sinless life, miracles and teaching (John 14:9; Hebrews 4:15; Matthew 4:23-24). He provided salvation through His atoning death in

our place and by His bodily resurrection (I Corinthians 15:3-4; II Corinthians 5:21; Romans 4:23-25). He ascended into heaven where He rules over all creation (Philippians 2:5-11). He intercedes for all believers and dwells in them as their ever-present Lord (Romans 8:34; John 14:23).

- c. The Holy Spirit inspired men to write the Scriptures (II Peter 1:21). Through this Word, He convicts individuals of their sinfulness and of the righteousness of Christ, draws them to the Savior, and bears witness to their new birth (James 1:18; John 16:7-11; I Thessalonians 1:5-6; Romans 8:16). At regeneration and conversion, the believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:13). The Spirit indwells, seals and gives spiritual gifts to all believers for ministry in the church and society (Romans 8:9-11; Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 12:5-8; I Peter 4:10). He empowers, guides, teaches, fills, sanctifies and produces the fruit of Christlikeness in all who yield to Him (Acts 4:31; Romans 8:14; I Corinthians 2:10-13; Ephesians 5:18; II Thessalonians 2:13; Galatians 5:16; 22-23).

3. We believe God created an order of spiritual beings called angels to serve Him and do His will (Psalm 148:1-5; Colossians 1:16). The holy angels are obedient spirits ministering to the heirs of salvation and glorifying God (Hebrews 1:6-7; 13-14). Certain angels, called demons, Satan being their chief, through deliberate choice revolted and fell from their exalted position (Revelation 12:7-9). They now tempt individuals to rebel against God (I Timothy 4:1; I Peter 5:8). Their destiny in hell has been sealed by Christ's victory over sin and death (Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 20:10).

4. We believe God created man in His own image to have fellowship with Himself and to be steward over His creation (Genesis 1:26-28). As a result, each person is unique, possesses dignity and is worthy of respect (Psalm 139:13-17). Through the temptation of Satan, Adam chose to disobey God; this brought sin and death to the human race and suffering to all creation (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12-21; 8-22). Therefore, everyone is born with a sinful nature and needs to be reconciled to God (Romans 3:9-18, 23). Satan tempts people to rebel against God, even those who love Him (Ephesians 4:27; II Corinthians 2:11; Matthew 16:23). Nonetheless, everyone is personally responsible to God for thoughts, actions and beliefs and has the right to approach Him directly through Jesus Christ, the only mediator (Romans 14:12; I Timothy 2:5).

5. We believe salvation is redemption by Christ of the whole person from sin and death (II Timothy 1:9-10; I Thessalonians 5:23). It is offered as a free gift by God to all and must be received personally through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (I Timothy 2:4; Ephesians 2:8-9; Acts 20:21). An individual is united to Christ by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:27). As a child of God, the believer is acquitted of all guilt and brought into a new relationship of peace (Romans 5:1). Christians grow as the Holy Spirit enables them to understand and obey the Word of God (II Peter 3:18; Ephesians 4:15; I Thessalonians 3:12).

6. We believe the Church is the body of which Christ is the head and all who believe in Him are members (Ephesians 1:22-23; Romans 12:4-5). Christians are commanded to be baptized upon profession of faith and to unite with a local church for mutual encouragement and growth in discipleship through worship, nurture, service and the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world (Acts 2:41-42, 47; Luke 24:45-48). Each church is a self-governing body under the lordship of Christ with all members sharing responsibility (Acts 13:1-3; 14:26-28). The form of government is understood to be congregational (Matthew 18:17; Acts 6:3-6; 15:22-23).

The ordinances of the church are baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20). It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's identification with the death, burial and resurrection of the Savior Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3-5). The Lord's Supper is the partaking of the bread and of the cup by believers together as a continuing memorial of the broken body and shed blood of Christ. It is an act of thankful dedication to Him and serves to unite His people until He returns (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

To express unity in Christ, local churches form associations and a conference for mutual counsel, fellowship and a more effective fulfillment of Christ's commission (Acts 15; I Corinthians 6:1-3).

7. We believe religious liberty, rooted in Scripture, is the inalienable right of all individuals to freedom of conscience with ultimate accountability to God

(Genesis 1:27; John 8:32; II Corinthians 3:17; Romans 8:21; Acts 5:29). Church and state exist by the will of God. Each has distinctive concerns and responsibilities, free from control by the other (Matthew 22:21). Christians should pray for civil leaders, and obey and support government in matters not contrary to Scripture (I Timothy 2:1-4; Romans 13:1-7; I Peter 2:13-16). The state should guarantee religious liberty to all persons and groups regardless of their religious preferences, consistent with the common good.

8. We believe Christians, individually and collectively, are salt and light in society

(Matthew 5:13-16). In a Christlike spirit, they oppose greed, selfishness and vice; they promote truth, justice and peace; they aid the needy and preserve the dignity of people of all races and conditions (Hebrews 13:5; Luke 9:23; Titus 2:12; Philippians 4:8-9; I John 3:16-17; James 2:1-4).

We affirm the family as the basic unit of society and seek to preserve its integrity and stability (Genesis 2:21-25; Ephesians 6:1-4).

We believe the Bible teaches that marriage refers to the covenant relationship exclusively between one man and one woman, as instituted by God in the beginning (Genesis 2:20b-24; I Corinthians 7:2; Hebrews 13:4).

9. We believe God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring all things to their appropriate end and establish the new heaven and the new earth

(Ephesians 1:9-10, Revelation 21:1). The certain hope of the Christian is that Jesus Christ will return to the earth suddenly, personally and visibly in glory according to His promise (Titus 2:13; Revelation 1:7; 3:11; John 14:1-3). The dead will be raised, and Christ will judge mankind in righteousness (John 5:28-29). The unrighteous will be consigned to the everlasting punishment prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41, 46; Revelation 20:10). The righteous, in their resurrected and glorified bodies, will receive their reward and dwell forever with the Lord (Philippians 3:20-21; II Corinthians 5:10; I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

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