

BETHANY BAPTIST CHURCH

ALTONA, ILLINOIS

CHURCH CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

In gratitude to Almighty God for the gift of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, and believing that the supreme task of the Church of Jesus Christ is that of world-wide evangelism through the faithful witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every creature and that every Church should be a living soul-winning agency; and that there is a definite need among our churches for an unqualified loyalty to the Gospel of Christ as revealed in the Word of God, in the interest of a renewed emphasis upon this supreme task, we, therefore, as a Conservative Church, having humbly invoked the guidance of the Holy Spirit, have established an organization which shall function under the following Constitution and By-Laws:

ARTICLE I

NAME

The name of this church shall be:

The BETHANY BAPTIST CHURCH OF ALTONA, ILLINOIS

ARTICLE II

COVENANT

Acknowledging Jesus Christ to be our Savior and Lord, and accepting the Holy Scriptures as our rule of faith and practice, and recognizing the privilege and duty of uniting ourselves for Christian fellowship, the enjoyment of the Christian ordinances, the public worship of God, and the advancement of His Kingdom in the world, we do now, in the sight of God, And invoking His blessing, solemnly covenant to be a Church of the Lord Jesus Christ as warranted by the Word of God.

We further agree to maintain the institutions of the Gospel to submit ourselves to the orderly administration of the affairs of the Church, and to walk together in brotherly love.

ARTICLE III

OBJECTIVES

1. Jesus Christ crucified, risen, and coming again, Who is over all, God blessed forever. (Acts 4:10; John 14:23; Rom. 9:5)
2. The salvation of the lost at home and abroad. (Matt. 28:19-20)
3. To nourish and build up in the faith its members and encourage them to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. (II Pet. 3:18)
4. To encourage and advance Christian fellowship among the members and other believers of like faith practice, in conformity with the New Testament standards.
5. The fundamental principles of the Church are based upon the Word of God. Therefore, every member of the church is expected to live according to its teachings and avoid and refrain from that which is destructive to the Christian life and dishonorable to God. Every member is earnestly admonished to refrain from slander and evil speaking of one another; to pray constantly for the church, its members, and its ministry; and to live a holy and godly life in the midst of a faithless and perverse generation. (Col. 3:8,13; Phil. 2:15)

ARTICLE IV

DOCTRINE

1. We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the verbally inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God; that they are able to make wise unto salvation and are the final authority of faith and life. (II Tim. 3:16-17; II Pet. 1:20-21)
2. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19-20)
3. We believe in the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, His virgin birth, His sinless life, His miracles, His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, His bodily resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of the Father, His intercessory work, and in His personal return in power and glory. (Luke 1:34,35; II Cor. 5:21; Matt. 11:4,6; Rev. 5:9; Luke 24:36-43; Mark 16:19; I John 2:1; Luke 21:27)
4. We believe that man was created in the image of God, that he sinned and hereby incurred, not only physical death, but also that spiritual death which is separation from God, and that every human being is born with a sinful nature; therefore, we believe that for salvation of all men, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary. (Gen. 1:26,27; Rom. 5:12; Titus 3:5)
5. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice, and that all who believe on and accept Him are justified on the grounds of His shed blood. (Is. 53:3-6; Rom. 5:9)
6. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a Godly life. (Rom. 8:1-39)
7. We believe in the pre-tribulational, pre-millennial rapture of the Church, the Body and Bride of Christ. We believe in the period of Great Tribulation of seven years following the Rapture. The Great Tribulation (Daniel's seventieth week) will end with the coming of Christ in power and glory to the earth in order to set up His Kingdom and rule for a thousand years. (I Thess. 4:13-18; Dan. 9:24-27; Rev. 20:1-6) We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life, and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation. (John 5:28-29)
8. We believe that individual Christians are duty bound to bear constant and consistent witness by word, character, and deed, to Jesus Christ and His power to save. (Acts 1:8; James 1:22)
9. We believe in the Church of Jesus Christ as a living, spiritual body of which our Lord Himself is the Head and consisting of all regenerated people. (Eph. 4:4-16)
10. We believe in the observance of the Lord's Day as a day of rest and worship; in the ministry of the Word and in ordinances which Christ has appointed for His Church. (Heb.10:25)
 - A. Believer's Baptism - We believe in baptism by immersion as a means of testimony for the Church, not as a means of grace, but as an outward sign of an inward work of grace. (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:38,41; 10:47,48; 19:1-6; Col. 2:12; Rom. 6:4-6)
 - B. The Lord's Supper - We believe in the Lord's Supper as a means of testimony for the Church, not as a means of grace, but as a token of remembrance of the Atonement of Christ till He come. (Luke 22:19-20; I Cor. 11:23-26)
11. We believe in the eternal security of the believer in Christ. (John 10:27-29; Rom. 8:35-39)
12. We believe that all the saved should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Savior and Lord; and that separation from all religious apostasy, all worldly and sinful pleasures, practices, and associations is commanded by God. (Rom. 12:1-2; 14:13; I John 2:15-17; I Tim. 3:1-5; II John 9-11; II Cor. 6:14; 7:1)

ARTICLE V

MEMBERSHIP

Conditions of Membership - The condition for membership in this local church is the same as that required for membership in the invisible church-namely, saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Those applying for admission to the membership of the Church must have accepted and signed the Doctrinal Statement of the Bethany Baptist Church, whether by confession of faith or by letter of transfer.
2. By Letter:
 - A. Reception by Letter - The membership of this church may consist of those who present satisfactory letter of transfer from other churches, and confess their Christian faith and receive baptism, where not previously baptized, and have been accepted by vote of the majority of the members present and voting, and publicly assent to the covenant of the church.
 - B. If the candidate is a member of another church, the clerk shall write to that church, telling of the candidate's desire to unite with this church. The right band of fellowship will be given after the candidate has met the conditions of membership as outlined in this Constitution.
3. Applicants for membership in this church shall consist of those who:
 - A. Come by confession of faith, by letter of transfer or recommendation.
 - B. Membership shall consist of those applicants interviewed by the Pastor personally and have given their personal testimony to the Board of Deacons, whose recommendation is required before their testimony may be heard by the church and their membership considered, and have received baptism where not previously baptized.
 - C. The majority vote of the members present shall be required before the applicant may become a member and receive the right band of fellowship.
4. Duties, Rights, Standing, Termination.
 - A. Duties - Members in good standing are expected, first of all, to be faithful in all the spiritual duties essential to the Christian life; and also to attend habitually the services of the church, to give regularly for its support, and to share in its organized work.
 - B. Rights - The right to vote upon church affairs is limited to members of the church in good standing, eighteen years of age or older.
 - C. Standing - The membership list shall be divided into three parts:
 1. Active resident members in good standing.
 2. Inactive members.
 3. Active non-resident members in good standing - consisting of members in service of their country, in schools, or on the mission field who by reason of distance are unable to attend the services regularly.
 - D. Termination
 1. By letter of withdrawal - A member may, by his request and vote of the church:
 - a. Be granted a letter of transfer or recommendation to a fundamental, Bible-believing Church.
 - b. Be released from membership if, after due conference and deliberation, he or she is insistent of his or her request for such release.
 2. By Retirement - Members failing to support the church by their attendance within a period of three months, without legitimate excuse, will be placed on the inactive list and so lose their right to vote. All members placed on the inactive list shall be notified by the clerk at the place of the last address. If there is no response on the part of the inactive member within three months of being placed on the inactive list, he or she shall be dropped from the roll of the church.
 3. Membership shall be severed by death.

4. By Exclusion - In all cases of disorderly conduct or heretical doctrine so opposed to the church's life and faith as to destroy the possibility of fellowship, procedure shall be in the following manner: The suspected person shall first be dealt with and interviewed as directed in Matthew 18:15-18. If this does not lead to the desired repentance and restoration of fellowship, charges shall be put into writing and placed in the hands of the suspected person, and he or she may be summoned to meet the Board at some date not more than two and not less than one week subsequently. The accused, on being notified, may immediately select any member of the Board to assist or represent him or her in the examination while the chairman shall appoint one of the members for prosecution. After a fair and impartial hearing of all the witnesses accessible and all facts ascertainable, if the majority believes him or her to be guilty, the same or said person shall be stricken from the roll and publicly read at the first regular business meeting. Failure on the part of the accused to appear for trial will not prevent the Board from examining the case and rendering a verdict in accord with the testimony received. Such an offender may be restored if he repents of his offense. (Matt. 18:15-17; I Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1; I Cor.2:5-11)
 5. Any member whose membership has been terminated may, for good and sufficient reasons, be restored to membership by vote of the church.
- E. Age - Those 12 years old and up are eligible for membership, but do not have the right to vote until age 18.

ARTICLE VI

GOVERNMENT

The government of this church is vested in its members, who exercise the right of control of all its affairs. It is amenable to no other ecclesiastical body. The status of the Bethany Baptist Church of Altona will be to have voluntary fellowship with other fundamental churches.

BUSINESS MEETINGS

1. The annual meeting shall be held on the third Thursday of January, for the purpose of hearing the reports of the officers of the church and to hear and vote upon the budget for the ensuing year, and to transact such other business as may be deemed necessary.
2. Special meetings of the church may be called by the Pastor or on request of any committee, or on the written request of any five adult members, specifying the objects thereof: such notice shall be read at the worship services on the Lord's Day next preceding the day fixed for such meeting. No special meeting shall be held on the same day on which the notice is given.
3. All routine business on a Mid-Week service night is to be conducted before the regular Prayer Meeting and Bible Study hour; unfinished business to be finished at a later date. Such meetings shall be announced at the services on the Lord's Day preceding the day fixed for such meetings.
4. No finance shall be raised by this church or any organization of this church by means of:
 - A. Suppers, bazaars, rummage sales, bake sales, etc.
 - B. Renting any property of this church to any outside organizations.
 - C. Any outside sales or promotions for financial gain in the name of this church.
 - D. Books and Christian literature may be sold in the church during Bible Conferences, Evangelistic meetings and special services for the purpose of assisting in the Proclamation of Bible Doctrine and the Christian Life.

QUORUM

One-third of the voting members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at called business meetings. Lack of a sufficient number of the membership to be present will necessitate postponement of the meeting. A majority vote shall ordinarily be decisive.

PROCEDURE

Roberts Rules of Order shall be the rules of order at all business meetings.

ARTICLE VII

OFFICERS AND COMMITEES

Section I - Personnel

The officers of this church shall consist of (when such spiritually qualified people are available) the Pastor, three to seven Deacons-Trustees, a clerk, a treasurer, assistant treasurer, and Sunday School Superintendent.

Section II- Nominations and Elections

The entire voting membership (those members placed on the inactive membership list are not able to vote) shall constitute the nominating committee. A primary ballot listing the offices to be filled together with a list of qualifications for each officer shall be mailed to each voting member by the Board of Deacons not later than November first of each year. The ballots must be returned to the Deacons not later than November twentieth. The Deacons and the church clerk shall open the nominations. The two qualified men receiving the highest number of votes for each office shall be placed upon a ballot for election at the business meeting, held on the first Thursday of each December. The voting at this meeting will be done by secret ballot with a majority of all votes cast to be required to elect. Again the ballots will be opened by the Deacons and the Church Clerk. No officer or Sunday School teacher shall be elected to serve in this church who uses tobacco or alcoholic beverages or gambles.

Section III- Pastor

The Pastor, to be chosen by the Church whenever a vacancy occurs, shall hold his office without limitation of time. Prior to his call, he shall have been invited by the Pulpit Committee to meet with the church membership and preach at least one worship service. It shall be his duty to preach the Word, to care for the stated service of public worship, to administer the ordinances, and promote the spiritual welfare of the church and those whom it serves. He shall be an advisor of all boards and committees and shall be informed of all meetings of said boards and committees; shall preside at all meetings of the church except when matters concerning himself are concerned. The pastoral relation may be dissolved either by the church or by the pastor upon due notice of sixty days in writing of such intention. A vote of 75% will be required to call a pastor at a meeting called for that purpose. A vote of 60% will be required to dismiss a pastor at a meeting called for that purpose.

Section IV - Deacon-Trustees

- A. Qualifications - The Deacons-Trustees shall be expected to meet the requirements of Acts 6:1-7 and I Tim. 3:8-13. They must be born-again believers. There shall be at least three Deacons-Trustees who shall hold this office for three-year terms, one to be elected each year when spiritually qualified men are available. There may be from three to seven Deacons-Trustees.
- B. Duties - The duties of the Deacons-Trustees are to rule (I Tim. 3:4-5; 5:17), to guard the body of revealed truth from perversion and error (Titus 1:9), to oversee the church as a shepherd his flock (Acts 20:20; John 21:16; Heb. 13:17; I Pet. 5:2). They shall assist the Pastor in all the spiritual matters of the church; and endeavor to remedy the spiritual weakness in the lives of the members of the church; visit the sick, the delinquents and the unruly, interview prospective members; assist the Pastor at the Lord's Supper, and assist the men at baptismal services. In short, the Deacons-Trustees have charge of the spiritual affairs of the church. For all temporal or legal matters they shall be considered trustees of the church. In the absence of the Pastor the chairman of the Deacons-Trustees Board shall preside over the business sessions of the church. The Deacons-Trustees shall likewise compose the Pulpit Committee when such is needed. The Deacons-Trustees shall organize and elect a chairman and clerk annually in the first meeting of the new year. They shall make recommendations concerning church property for final action by the church. They shall keep the church property in repair. When it is necessary, they shall hire a custodian, fix his compensation, and see that he performs his duty. The Board is to be responsible for filling the pulpit during the Pastor's vacation, when the pulpit is vacant during the interim period, etc.

Section V - Clerk

The Clerk shall be elected each year and shall not be eligible for re-election after five consecutive years until lapse of one year, if he remains a member in good standing. The Clerk shall issue letters of transfer voted by the church, preserve on file all communications, documents and written reports; notify all persons elected to office and to Committees; give legal notice of all meetings when such notice is necessary; report all communications intended for the church, and conduct as may be necessary its correspondence, and shall keep the list of the entire membership up to date. The Clerk shall record in the permanent record the proceedings of all meetings of the church before two weeks have elapsed after such action.

Section VI- Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be elected each year and shall not be eligible for re-election after five consecutive years until a lapse of one year if they remain a member in good standing. The duties shall be to keep an accurate record of all monies received and disbursed during the year and to give a report of such at the Annual Meeting. He shall give a written report to Deacons-Trustees each month, and a copy shall be placed on the bulletin board. He shall acknowledge in writing all outside gifts.

Section VII- Assistant Treasurer

The Assistant Treasurer shall be elected each year and shall not be eligible for re-election after five consecutive years until a lapse of one year if he remains a member in good standing. To be ready to help and aid the Treasurer in his duties and to assume his duties in his absence. Both the Treasurer and the Assistant Treasurer shall be bonded at the expense of the church for an amount to be set by the church upon recommendation of the Deacon-Trustee Board.

Section VIII- Sunday School Superintendent

The Sunday School Superintendent shall be elected each year and shall not be eligible for reelection after five consecutive years until a lapse of one year if he remain a member in good standing. He shall have general oversight and direction of the Church School. In questions of policy he shall look to the Board of Deacons-Trustees as his advisory council. In choosing teachers, assistants, and substitutes, the Superintendent shall meet with the Pastor and Deacons-Trustees Board.

Section IX - Committees

Any other office or committee may be formed as the need may arise. Such offices or committees should be appointed by the Board of Deacons-Trustees and approved by the vote of the church for a period of one year. All such officers or committees are subject to the Board of Deacons-Trustees. All youth sponsors shall be appointed by the Board of Deacons-Trustees for as long a duration as it deems wise. All sponsors must be members in good standing.

Section X - Licensing

When a member feels the call of God and has shown the gifts of the ministry, he shall be granted at his request and by a two-third majority vote of members present and voting a license to preach the Gospel of Christ and perform the work of the ministry as God gives opportunity. This license may be renewed annually at the regular Annual Meeting by a two-third-majority vote of members present and voting. If not renewed, it shall become invalid. This license may be terminated by a two-third-majority vote of members present and voting for conduct unbecoming a minister.

Section XI- Ordination

When a member feels the call of God to the ministry and the church decides that one of its licensed preachers possesses the Scriptural qualifications for full ordination, a committee shall be appointed to call a council of ministers and brethren to examine the qualifications of the candidate, to which council the property and business of ordaining shall be wholly referred.

Section XII - Commissioning of Missionaries

When a member feels the call of God to the mission field and the church decides that one of its members possesses the Scriptural qualifications for missionary service, the church shall call for a special service of commission, at which time the missionary candidate will be properly commissioned for full-time missionary service with the understanding that the congregation by so recognizing said candidate approves the missionary's purposes, doctrine, and service.

Section XIII - Missions

Missionary candidates and projects for our financial support shall be chosen from Mission Boards and individuals that agree with our Covenant, Constitution, and take an uncompromising stand for the Word of God.

Section XIV - Property of Church

The property of the Bethany Baptist Church of Altona shall forever remain in the control of its members. Should the Bethany Baptist Church disband, its property may be sold and revenue there from be divided among its members.

THIS CONSTITUTION MAY BE AMENDED BY A SPECIAL CALLED MEETING FOR THAT PURPOSE BY A THREE-FOURTH MAJORITY OF THE VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT AT THE MEETING AFTER A 90 DAY NOTICE OF THE MEETING. NOTICE SHALL BE READ FROM THE PULPIT AT LEAST ONCE EACH MONTH PRIOR TO THE STATED MEETING.

AMMENDMENTS

AMENDMENT TO ARTICLE VII, SECTION IV, B - DUTIES.

ADOPTED SEPTEMBER 24, 1971 BY VOTE OF THE CHURCH.

The duties of the Deacons as found in Acts 6:1-6: to visit and assist those of the fellowship who are sick. To seek out those who are delinquent in attendance and to endeavor to help them in any spiritual way they can. To arrange care for the needy families after investigation, interview prospective members, and assist men in baptismal services. They shall be trustees on all temporal and legal matters concerning the church.

AMMENDMENT TO CONSTITUTION, ARTICLE VII, SECTION XIV

The property of the Bethany Baptist Church of Altona shall forever remain in the control of its members. Should the Bethany Baptist Church disband, its property or the proceeds from the sale of its property shall be given to a charitable ministry of the choice of the remaining voting members.

AMMENDMENT TO CONSTITUTION, ARTICLE IV, SECTION XIII

ADOPTED JANUARY 16, 2005 BY VOTE OF THE CHURCH

Biblical Marriage

1. 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. We believe that God rejects any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance.

2. We believe that the only legitimate marriage is the joining of one man and one woman.

3. We believe that men and women are spiritually equal in position before God but that God has ordained distinct and separate spiritual functions for men and women in the home and the church. The husband is to be the leader of the home and men are to be the leaders (pastors and deacons) of the church. Accordingly, only men are eligible for licensure and ordination by the church.

Gen. 2:24; 19:5, 13; 26:8-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1:26-29; Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9; 1 Cor. 7:10; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 5:22-23; Col. 3:18; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 3:4-5, 12; Heb. 13:4.