

# **ANTIOCH BAPTIST CHURCH**

## **CONSTITUTION**

### **PREAMBLE**

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

### **I. NAME**

This body shall be known as the Antioch Baptist Church of Fairfax, Virginia.

### **II. OBJECTIVES**

To be a dynamic spiritual organism empowered by the Holy Spirit to share Christ with as many people as possible in our church, community, and throughout the world.

To be a worshipping fellowship, experiencing an awareness of God, recognizing his person, and responding in obedience to his leadership.

To experience an increasingly meaningful fellowship with God and fellowship believers.

To help people experience a growing knowledge of God and man.

To be a church which ministers unselfishly to persons in the community and the world in Jesus' name.

To be a church whose purpose is to be Christlike in our daily living by emphasizing total commitment of life, personality, and possessions to the lordship of Christ.

### **III. FAITH AND DOCTRINE**

#### **ARTICLES OF FAITH**

##### **1. SCRIPTURE.**

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us, and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions shall be tried.

##### **2. THE TRUE GOD.**

We believe the Scriptures teach that there is one, and only one, living and true God, an infinite, intelligent Spirit, whose name is Jehovah, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.

### **3. THE FALL OF MAN.**

We believe the Scriptures teach that Man was created in holiness, under the law of his Maker; but by voluntary transgression fell from that holy and happy state; in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not by constraint but by choice; being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil; and therefore under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defense or excuse.

### **4. THE WAY OF SALVATION.**

We believe that the Scriptures teach that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace; through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God which are prophet, priest, and king; who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon him our nature, yet without sin; honored the divine law by his personal obedience, and by his death made a full atonement for our sins; that having risen from the dead, he is now enthroned in heaven; and uniting in his wonderful person that tenderest sympathies with divine perfections, he is in every way qualified to be suitable, a compassionate, and an all-sufficient Savior.

### **5. JUSTIFICATION.**

We believe the Scriptures teach that the great Gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in him is justification; that justification includes the pardon of sin, and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood; by virtue of which faith his perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us of God; that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity.

### **6. THE FREENESS OF SALVATION.**

We believe that the Scriptures teach that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the Gospel; that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by cordial, penitent and obedient faith; and nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth, but his own determined depravity and voluntary rejection of the Gospel; which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation.

## **7. REGENERATION.**

We believe that the Scriptures teach that in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again; that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind that it is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the Gospel; and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith, and newness of life.

## **8. REPENTANCE AND FAITH.**

We believe the Scriptures teach that repentance and faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger and helplessness and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our prophet, priest and king, and relying on him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior.

## **9. GOD'S PURPOSE OF GRACE.**

We believe the Scriptures teach that election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which he graciously regenerates, sanctifies and saves sinners; that being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end; that it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy and unchangeable; that it utterly excludes boasting and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of his free mercy; that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree; that it may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the Gospel; that it is the foundation of Christian assurance; and that to ascertain it with regard to ourselves demands and deserves the utmost diligence.

## **10. SANCTIFICATION.**

We believe the Scriptures teach that sanctification is the process by which according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness; that it is progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means especially the word of God, self examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer.

## **11. PERSEVERANCE OF SAINTS.**

We believe the Scriptures teach that such only are real believers as endure to the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special Providence watches over their welfare; and they are kept by the power of God through Faith unto salvation.

## **12. THE LAW AND GOSPEL.**

We believe the Scriptures teach that the Law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of his moral government; that it is holy, just and good; and that the inability which the Scriptures ascribe to fallen men to fulfill its precepts, arise entirely from their love of sin; to deliver them from which, and to restore them through a Mediator to unfeigned obedience to the holy Law, is one great end of the Gospel, and of the Means of Grace connected with the establishment of the visible church.

## **13. A GOSPEL CHURCH.**

We believe the Scriptures teach that a visible church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by his laws; and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word; that its only scriptural officers are Bishops or Pastors, and Deacons whose Qualifications, claims and duties are defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

## **14. BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER.**

We believe the Scriptures teach that Christian baptism is the immersion in water of a believer, into the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost; to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, with its effect, in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life; that it is prerequisite to the privileges of a church relation; and to the Lord's Supper, in which the members of the church, by the sacred use of bread and wine, are to commemorate together to the dying love of Christ; preceded always by solemn self-examination.

## **15. THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.**

We believe the Scriptures teach that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day, or Christian Sabbath, and is to be kept sacred to religious purposes, by abstaining from all secular labor and sinful recreations, by the devout observance of all the means of grace, both private and public, and by preparation for that rest that remaineth for the people of God.

## **16. CIVIL GOVERNMENT.**

We believe the Scriptures teach that civil government is of divine appointment, for the interest and good order of human society, and that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed; except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of the Kings of the earth.

## **17. RIGHTEOUS AND WICKED.**

We believe the Scriptures teach that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that such only as through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God, are truly righteous in his esteem; while all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in his sight wicked, and under the curse; and this distinction holds among men both in and after death.

## **18. THE WORLD TO COME.**

We believe the Scriptures teach that the end of the world is approaching; that at the last day, Christ will descend from heaven, and raise the dead from the grave for final retribution; that a solemn separation will then take place; that the wicked will be adjudged to endless punishment, and that the righteous to endless joy; and that this judgment will fix forever the final state of men in heaven or hell, on principles of righteousness.

## **IV. CHURCH COVENANT**

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

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

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to study diligently the word of God; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale of and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage; to use our influence to combat the use of illegal drugs and the spread of pornography; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and Christian courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place we will as soon as possible unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

## **V. DOCTRINAL STATEMENT**

From Scripture we believe the following doctrinal affirmation:

1. We believe in the Bible as the inerrant Word of God, verbally inspired, the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice.
2. We believe in one God, eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. We believe in the Virgin birth, the sinless perfection, the bodily resurrection and ascension into heaven of Jesus Christ, and in His present life there for us as High Priest and Advocate.
4. We believe man was created in the image of God, that he disobeyed God, and thereby incurred spiritual death, which is separation from God, and also physical death as a consequence; and that all the Adamic race are born in sin and are sinners by nature and practice.
5. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins as a vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice, and that all who believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood.
6. We believe in the personal, premillennial and imminent return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
7. We believe that all who receive by faith the Lord Jesus Christ are born of the Holy Spirit and thereby become children of God.
8. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and unjust, the everlasting blessedness of the saved, and the everlasting punishment of the lost.
9. We believe the Church is an elect company of believers baptized by the Holy Spirit into one body; its mission is to witness concerning its Head, Jesus Christ, preaching the gospel among all nations; it will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air ere he appears to set up his kingdom.
10. We believe the grace of god to be sufficient for the maintenance of a godly walk, and that Christ and not the law is the believer's rule of life.

## **VI. POLITY AND RELATIONSHIPS**

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. Persons duly received by the members shall constitute the membership. These members must be in good standing and will exercise the right of control in all of the church affairs.

All internal groups created and empowered by the church shall report to and be accountable only to the church, unless otherwise specified by church action.

This church is subject to control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains to the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation, which are common among Baptist churches.

## BYLAWS

### I. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

**SECTION 1. GENERAL.** This is a sovereign and democratic Baptist church under the lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains unto itself the exclusive right of self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this church.

The membership reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members of this church and the conditions of such membership.

**SECTION 2. CANDIDACY.** Any person may offer himself as a candidate for membership in this church. All such candidates shall be presented to the church at any regular church service for membership in any of the following ways:

(1) After a public profession of faith in Christ as personal Savior, and upon baptism by immersion in water as authorized by the Church; or

(2) Upon receipt of a Church letter of dismissal and recommendation from some other Baptist Church of like faith and order; or

(3) By statement acceptable to the Church, of previous membership after baptism in a Baptist Church of like faith and order.

**SECTION 3. NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION.** New members of this church are expected to participate in the church's new member orientation.

#### **SECTION 4. RIGHTS OF MEMBERS.**

(1) Every member of the church is entitled to vote at all elections and on all questions submitted to the church in conference, provided the member is present or provision has been made for absentee balloting.

(2) Every member of the church is eligible for consideration by the membership as candidates for elective offices in the church.

(3) Every member of the church may participate in the ordinances of the church as administered by the church.

**SECTION 5. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP.** Membership shall be terminated in the following ways: (1) death of the member, (2) dismissal to another Baptist church, (3) exclusion by action of this church, or (4) erasure upon request or proof of membership in a church of another denomination.

**SECTION 6. DISCIPLINE.** It shall be the practice of this church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure will be taken to assist any troubled member. The pastor, other members of the church staff, and deacons are available for counsel and guidance. The attitude of members toward one another shall be guided by a concern for redemption rather than punishment.

Should some serious condition exist which would cause a member to become a liability to the general welfare of the church, the pastor and the deacons will take every reasonable measure to resolve the problem in accord with Matthew 18. If it becomes necessary for the church to take action to exclude a member, a two-thirds vote of the members present is required; and the church may proceed to declare the person to be no longer in the membership of the church. All such proceedings shall be pervaded by a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance.

The church may restore to membership any person previously excluded, upon request of the excluded person, and by vote of the church upon evidence of the excluded person's repentance and reformation.

## **II. CHURCH OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES**

All who serve as officers of the church and those who serve on church committees shall be members of this church.

### **SECTION 1. CHURCH OFFICERS.**

The officers of this church shall be a pastor, members of the board of deacons, members of the board of deaconesses, a clerk, a treasurer, and a board of trustees.

- (1) The pastor is responsible for leading the church to function as a New Testament church. The pastor will lead the congregation, the organizations, and the church staff to perform their tasks.

The pastor is leader of pastoral ministries in the church. As such he works with the deacons to: (1) lead the church in the achievement of its mission, (2) proclaim the gospel to believers and unbelievers, and (3) care for the church's member and other persons in the community.

A pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. The election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one week's public notice has been given.

A pastor selection committee shall be elected by the church to seek out a suitable pastor, and its recommendations will constitute a nomination. Any church member has the privilege of making other nominations according to the policy established by the church. The committee shall bring to the consideration of the church only one name at a time. Election shall be by ballot, an affirmative vote of the majority of those present being necessary for a choice. The



pastor, thus elected, shall serve until the relationship is terminated by his request or the church's request. He shall preside at meetings of this church, and will serve as moderator in all business meetings in keeping with the rules of order authorized in these bylaws.

The pastor may relinquish the office as pastor by giving at least two week's notice to the church at the time of resignation. The church may declare the office of pastor to be vacant. Such action shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one week's public notice has been given. The meeting may be called upon the recommendation of a majority of the personnel committee and the deacons or by written petition signed by not less than one fourth of the resident church members. The moderator for this meeting shall be designated by the members present by majority vote, and he shall be someone other than the pastor. The vote to declare the office vacant shall be by secret ballot; an affirmative vote of two thirds of the members present being necessary to declare the office vacant. Except in instances of gross misconduct by the pastor so excluded from office, the church will compensate the pastor with not less than one twelfth of his total annual compensation. The termination shall be immediate and the compensation shall be rendered in not more than thirty days.

(2) The ministerial staff shall be called and employed as the church determines the need for such offices. A job description shall be written when the need for a staff member is determined. Those staff members of whom the church required evidence of a personal call of God to minister shall be recommended to the church by the pastor and deacon board and called by church action. At the time of resignation at least two weeks' notice shall be given to the church. The church may vote to vacate such positions upon recommendation of the pastor and deacon board, such termination being immediate and the compensation conditions being the same as for the pastor, except that the amount shall relate to the individual's compensation.

Nonministerial staff members shall be employed as the church determines the need for their service. The church pastor shall have the authority to employ and to terminate services of nonministerial staff members. Such employment and termination of services shall be with the recommendation of the supervising staff member and, as appropriate, with the consultant of related committees of the church.

(3) The church shall elect deacons by ballot at regular business meetings of the church. The term of office of a Deacon shall terminate upon his death, his resignation, termination of his membership in the church or his removal from such office by the church.

Election shall be held to fill vacancies and to add to the deacons numbers as the church size warrants. In case of death or removal or incapacity to serve, the church may elect a deacon to fill the unexpired term.

In accordance with the meaning of the work and the practice in the New Testament, deacons are to be servants of the church. Their task is to serve with the pastor and staff in performing the pastoral ministries tasks of (1) leading the church in the achievement of its mission, (2) proclaiming the gospel to believers and unbelievers, and (3) caring for the church's members and other persons in the community.

(4) The church shall elect deaconesses by ballot at regular business meetings of the church. The term of office of a Deaconess shall terminate upon her death, her resignation, termination of her membership in the church or her removal from such office by the church.

Election shall be held to fill vacancies and to add to the deaconesses numbers as the church size warrants.

It shall be the duty of the deaconesses to cooperate with the pastor and the board of deacons in the fulfillment of their duties in regard to matters relating to the development and advancement of the spiritual life of the church. They shall be especially helpful and supportive to the pastor and deacons in sick visitations, baptismal services, in preparation of the Lord's Supper, in aiding in the spiritual development of the young ladies of the church, and in other ministrations to the membership as the pastor and the board of deacons deem necessary.

(5) The church shall elect annually a clerk as its clerical officer. The clerk shall be responsible for keeping a suitable record of all official actions of the church, except as otherwise herein provided. The clerk shall be responsible for keeping a register of names of members, with dates of admissions, dismissal, death, or erasure, together with a record of baptisms. The clerk shall issue letters of dismissal voted by the church, preserve on file all communications and written official reports, and indicated in notice of all meetings where notice is necessary, as indicated in these bylaws.

All church records are church property and shall be kept in the church office when an office is maintained.

(6) The church shall elect a church treasurer as its financial officer. The treasurer shall deposit all monies, securities, or documents received in the name of the church. Funds are to be deposited at least 72 hours after collection. The treasurer shall make disbursement of expenses up to the amount provided for in the budget. Two signatures will be required for validation of a check; they will be the signature of the treasurer, or designated deacon, or a designated trustee.

It shall be the duty of the treasurer to render to the church at each regular business meeting an itemized report of the receipts and disbursements of the preceding period.

(7) The church shall elect three or more trustees to serve as legal officers for the church. They shall hold in trust the church property. Upon a specific vote the church authorizing each action, they shall have the power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any church property. When the signatures of trustees are required, they shall sign legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or rental of property, or other legal documents related to church-approved matters and will require a minimum of three (3) church-appointed Trustee signatures with one of those signatures being that of the Trustee Chair or Vice Chair.

## **SECTION 2. CHURCH COMMITTEES.**

(1) The budget committee develops and recommends a unified church budget, and budget subscription plans. It advises and recommends in the administration of the gifts of church members and others, using sound principles of financial management. It works with the

treasurer in the preparation and presentation to the church of required reports regarding the financial affairs of the church.

(2) The missions committee seeks to discover possibilities for local missions projects, shares findings with church program organizations, and serves the church in establishing and conducting such missions projects as may be assigned to it.

### **III. CHURCH PROGRAM ORGANIZATIONS**

The church shall maintain programs of Bible teaching; church member training, church leader training, new member orientation; mission education, action, and support; and music education, training, and performance. All organizations related to the church programs shall be under church control, all officers being elected by the church and reporting regularly to the church, and all program activities subject to church coordination and approval. The church shall provide the human resources, the physical resource, and the financial resources for the appropriate advancement of these programs.

(1) The Church School shall be the basic organization for the Bible teaching program. Its tasks shall be to teach the biblical revelation, reach persons for Christ and church membership, perform the functions of the church within its constituency, provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and denomination.

(2) The Church music organization, under the direction of the church-elected music director, shall be the music education, training, and performance organization of the church. Its tasks shall be to teach music, train persons to lead, sing, and play music; provide music in the church and community; and provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and denomination.

The Church Music program shall have such officers and organizations as the program requires.

### **IV. CHURCH ORDINANCES**

#### **SECTION 1. BAPTISM.**

This church shall receive for baptism any person who has received Jesus Christ as Savior by personal faith, who professes him publicly at any worship service, and who indicates a commitment to follow Christ as Lord.

(1) Baptism shall be by immersion in water.

(2) The Pastor, or whomever the church shall authorize, shall administer baptism. The deacons shall assist in the preparation for, and the observance of baptism.

(3) Baptism shall be administered as an act of worship during any worship service of the church.

(4) A person who professes Christ and is not baptized after a reasonable length of time shall be counseled by the Pastor and/or staff deacons. If negative interest is ascertained on the part of the candidate, he shall be deleted from those awaiting baptism.

## **SECTION 2. THE LORD'S SUPPER.**

The church shall observe the Lord's Supper monthly, the second Sunday of the month, unless otherwise scheduled by the church. The pastor and deacons shall administer the Lord's Supper, the deacons being responsible for the physical preparations.

## **V. CHURCH MEETING**

### **SECTION 1. WORSHIP SERVICES.**

The church shall meet regularly each Sunday morning, for the worship of Almighty God. Prayer, praise, preaching, instruction, and evangelism shall be among the ingredients of these services. The pastor shall direct the services for all the church members and for all others who may choose to attend.

### **SECTION 2. SPECIAL SERVICES.**

Revival services and any other church meetings essential to the advancement of the church's objectives shall be placed on the church calendar.

### **SECTION 3. REGULAR BUSINESS MEETINGS.**

The church shall hold regular business meetings quarterly.

### **SECTION 4. SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETINGS.**

The church may conduct called business meetings to consider matters of special nature and significance.

### **SECTION 5. QUORUM.**

The quorum consists of those members who attend the business meeting, provided it is a stated meeting or one that has been properly called.

## **SECTION 6. PARLIAMENTARY RULES.**

Robert's Rules of Order, Revised, is the authority for parliamentary rules of procedures for all business meetings of the church.

## **VI. CHURCH FINANCES**

### **SECTION 1. BUDGET.**

The budget committee shall prepare and submit to the church for approval an inclusive budget, indicating by items the amount needed and sought for all local and other expense. Offering envelopes will be provided for members' use.

It is understood that membership in this church involves financial obligation to support the church and its causes with regular, proportionate gifts. Annually there shall be opportunity provided to secure worthy commitments of financial support from church members.

### **SECTION 2. ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES.**

All funds received for any and all purposes shall pass through the hands of the church treasurer and be properly recorded on the books of the church.

### **SECTION 3. FISCAL YEAR.**

The church fiscal year shall run concurrently with the church year which begins on January 1 and ends on December 31.

## **VII. AMENDMENTS**

Changes in the constitution and the bylaws may be made at any regular business meeting of the church provided each amendment shall have been presented in writing at a previous business meeting and copies of the proposed amendment shall have been furnished to each member present at the earlier meeting. Amendments to the constitution shall be two-thirds vote of church members present. Amendments to the bylaws shall have a concurrence of all majority of the members present and voting.