



Articles of Faith and Duties of Membership Of the Old Baptist Union in America

The following are the rules, or brief Articles of Faith, of the Old Baptist Union in America and its affiliated churches. The articles are based upon those, which were submitted to the ministers and members of the International Old Baptist Union, and approved when the Conference was organized in London, August 18th, 1880. Those articles being originally based on the scriptural principles of the General Baptists of 1611 and 1660. We, representing the regeneration of the Old Baptists of America, founded in 1638, justly claim to be known as "Old Baptists".

1. - That we believe with all our hearts in the only true and living God, the Creator and Preserver of all things visible and invisible; and in unity of this Godhead there are three Persons, the Father, the son, and the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19; 1 John 5:7; Exodus 20:3)
2. - That we believe in the Bible as a revelation from God for man's continual guidance in connection with the Holy Spirit: and the Bible shall be our rule of Faith. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:21; Isaiah 8:20)
3. - That we should love God with all our hearts and with all our souls, and with all our strength; and our neighbors, brothers, and sisters as ourselves. (Matthew 22:37-40; John 15:12)
4. - That we believe in true sanctification, and walking with God, and that man should live "By every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4), required of him in the Prophets, and in the Gospel dispensation. And we believe that without complete obedience to the word and will of God it is impossible to be perfectly holy, our growth in holiness being proportionate to our obedience. (1 Thessalonians 4:3a; Hebrews 12:14; Hebrews 6:1; 1 John 3:3, Hebrews 8:21)
5. - That we believe all believers are saved by the grace of God and merits of Jesus Christ, and that salvation, from first to last, is the gift of God to fallen man, without merit, and that we are complete in Christ through faith in the atonement - Who is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. And we believe that God is "Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9), for which end Christ has commanded that the Gospel should be preached to every creature. (Ephesians 2:8; Colossians 2:10)

6. - That we contend for the one Faith of God, of which Christ is the Author and Finisher, the faith once delivered to the saints, which honors God and is perfected by works. (Ephesians 4:5; Jude 3; James 2:22; Hebrews 11:6)

7. - That we believe in, and obey, all the doctrines of our Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament. And that we believe in and contend for all the blessings and promises of God unto His people, both in the Prophets, and in the Gospel. (Hebrews 6:1,2; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; 2 Peter 1:3-4; 2 Corinthians 1:20)

8. - That we believe it to be necessary that all who desire to enter the ministry, and administer the ordinances of the Gospel, should feel themselves called by the Holy Spirit to the work; and with the consent of the church, should be set apart by fasting and prayer, and by the laying on of hands of those previously called by the Holy Spirit, who have themselves been set apart to the work of God according to the Scriptures. (Acts 13:2,3; Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 4:14; Luke 2:36-38; Acts 21:9; Acts 2:17)

9. - That we believe God is with all men as far as they are honestly with Him. Those who wish to be united with us in full fellowship must have given evidence of conversion to Christ, and have been obedient to the ordinances of baptism and the laying-on-of-hands, in accordance with the doctrine of Christ and Apostolical practice as set forth in Hebrews 6:1-2. Nevertheless, those who have professed conversion to Christ may be received as probationary members. (2 John 9; Ephesians 6:24)

10. - That we believe there ought to be no schism or division in the Church of Christ, all division being contrary to the Spirit and word of God. (1 Corinthians 12:13; John 10:16; 1 Corinthians 1:10; John 17:21)

11. - That all meetings should be presided over by the Pastor of each Church, or by those appointed by him, unless the President of the Union or District Elder is present when they shall preside if they wish to do so. (Hebrews 13:17a; Ephesians 4:11,12; 1 Peter 5:1-4)

12. - That no Church of the Union shall be organized with less than four Members. A Committee of Management shall be appointed in each Church composed of not less than three Deacons or members who, in conjunction with the Pastor, shall have power to act for that Church. (Matthew 18:19, 20)

13. - That Churches of the Union shall be divided into Districts, as occasion may require; and all District Elders and Pastors of Churches shall be required to report their several Districts and Churches to Headquarters at General Conferences, that the Churches may move on in the unity of the faith, guided and guarded at all times by the Holy Spirit. (Acts 15:4; Ephesians 4:1-6)

14. - That no person should be ordained to the office of Elder, Pastor or Bishop (which calling is the same), without the sanction of the Council of Elders at a General Conference, when convenient. They must previously have been chosen to that office by a majority of the members of their Church and have faithfully filled the office upon probation. (1 Timothy 5:22; Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:10)

15. - That a Secretary, Treasurer, and all other necessary officers, shall be appointed in each Church, who shall give an account of the finances and all other matters which concern the Church, to the members. All members shall be at liberty to speak and vote, for or against, any motion that may be brought forward concerning their Church; and the decision of the majority shall end all controversy that may arise. (Acts 6:3; 1 Peter 4:5; Romans 14:12)

16. - That records shall be kept in each church, containing the names and addresses of the members; and records of Dedications, Baptisms, Ordinations. Deaths, etc.; and a minute book shall also be kept for the entry of all matters of importance that concern the church. (1 Corinthians 19:33, 40)

17. - That the Presiding Bishop serves as Chief Pastor and as such is charged to speak Gods word to the Union, to the Church and to the world. In this role, he has responsibility for initiating, developing and speaking about the policies, strategies and programs of the Union authorized by General Conferences. (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Romans 13:4a; Proverbs 29:2)

18. - That the Union shall be governed - under the Lord - by a President and a Council of Elders. The Council of Elders shall appoint a President and Secretary of each General Conference. Delegates to the General Conferences shall consist of all ordained officers of the Union - every member being thus fully represented and considered through these delegates. In cases were a congregation is blessed with more than one ordained minister, the senior minister will be the voting delegate with the subordinate minister being granted a voice but no vote. (Acts 15:6; Acts 14:27)

19. - That no appointments, decisions, or resolutions made by the Union at a General Conference in the manner aforesaid, shall afterwards be set aside by any church, society, institution, officer, or member connected with the Union, but these shall be binding upon all, as proceeding from them through their representatives. (Romans 13:1; 1 Corinthians 1:10)

20. - That any church or ministry seeking to join this Union, which administers the ordinances of Baptism by immersion to believers, and the Lord's Supper, and is willing to take the Bible as its rule of faith, shall first have a minister ordained in the Union. (Ephesians 4:13; Ephesians 4:3, 4)

May God add His blessing for Christ's sake.

Suggestions on the Duties of Membership

BELOVED IN CHRIST. - In drawing up these rules, for the sake of order and the protection of every member, we have striven to be understood by all, therefore they are few and simple. We are one in sympathy and interest with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that a church may have faith without superstition, freedom without caprice, cohesion without coercion, and width and extension without disorder.

Members of every section of Christ's Church have responsibilities and duties in their church life, for which they are accountable to the Great Head of the Church - our Lord Jesus - therefore the following suggestions demand our earnest attention.

SERVICE FOR GOD. - Every member is under solemn obligation to do something for the honor of the Lord and welfare of His cause. All are expected, as far as possible, to take an active part in some of the various departments of church work, such as the Sunday School, Children's Ministry, Music Ministry, Chaplaincy, Sick Visitation, etc. Your Pastor will be glad of your aid in these or other areas.

ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS. - Let us impress upon you the necessity of regular and punctual attendance at the House of God; not only on Sunday, but during the week also. To be on time is the way to get a blessing, to be late is often to be a hindrance to ourselves and others.

VISITATION. - When a member is unable to attend church functions through sickness or affliction, communication to that effect should be made to the Pastor. Members should not expect a visit until this has been done.

EXPENSES. - It is sometimes forgotten that every member is to be a fellow-helper of the truth by proportionate pecuniary co-operation. (Proverbs 3:9; 1 Corinthians 16:2a) A definite portion of your income should first be devoted to the service of God. Free-will offerings of the people are the proper means of the Minister's support (1 Corinthians 9:14; Galatians 6:6), who watches over your soul as one who must give account to Christ. Provide for his temporal needs as unto Christ, for He hath said, "Inasmuch as ye do it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye do it unto Me." The promise of God is, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you."

DEDICATION OF CHILDREN. - Christian parents desiring to acknowledge the Lord in all their ways, and publicly to name and dedicate their children to God by prayer in the presence of their fellow-believers, are invited to bring them for this purpose at the earliest suitable opportunity. The names of those dedicated will be duly entered into the records of the church, and a Dedication Card presented to the parents. The Pastor will be pleased to return thanks after childbirth, either in the Chapel or at the homes of Members.

MARRIAGES. - Only marriages between a man and a woman shall be performed by ministers of the Union.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS. – Special collections, for specific ministries or intentions will be gladly received. However, in all cases general expenses must first be met, as we do not consider it justifiable to give away what we owe to others.

RELOCATION OF MEMBERS. – Members relocating to new communities should endeavor to find a church of the Union in which to affiliate.

MODE OF ADMISSION INTO FELLOWSHIP. - Those desirous of joining the church must make application to the Pastor. Upon their giving satisfactory evidence of their conversion to Christ and Baptism, their names will be brought forward at the next meeting of the church, when the members will vote upon their being received, and the Pastor will give them the right hand of fellowship.

DEACONS. - Responsible Deacons shall be appointed to take charge of all property belonging to each church of the Union, for the protection of the members. No collection must be taken up or made among the members or outsiders for any purpose without the consent of the Pastor.

Remember that "Ye are the Body of Christ, and members in particular;" Be, therefore, examples to the Flock." As members of Christ, be not ashamed to confess before the world your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ your Savior, and let your light shine before men. Every member should set apart a portion of each day for the reading and study of God's Word, and should pray to God not less than twice a day, morning and evening, for him or herself, and all the members of the Church, and for all Christians everywhere.

Be patient, prayerful, watchful, temperate, gentle, loving and holy; growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Body, soul and spirit consecrate to God for His service that you may always be in communion with the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit. Jesus said: "Go, work in My vineyard." The Master has work in His vineyard for everyone, and whether your part be little or great, "do it heartily as unto the Lord." Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles in his faithful exhortation to believers, says: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love," (Ephesians 4:1-2). "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma." (Ephesians 5:1, 2). "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.", "that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another." (1 Corinthians 12:12, 25). Jesus said: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another..." (John 13:34)

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