

Constitution and By-Laws of



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Constitution

Preamble

Placing our faith wholly in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation, and believing in the teachings of the Holy Bible as the inspired, inerrant Word of the Living God, we affiliate ourselves with one another as a body of believers. Desiring to faithfully serve the Lord Jesus Christ, to foster the spirit of harmony, to promote good order in the Church, and to better set forth our position before the world, we do adopt and submit ourselves to the following articles as a declaration of our convictions so that we may carry on the work of the Lord, decently and in order.

Article I – Name

The members of this church or congregation, and all who may hereafter be regularly admitted to membership therewith, are hereby created and constitute a body politic and corporate, in deed and in law, by the name of “The Goshen Baptist Church,” and as such shall have perpetual succession, and be able to sue and be sued—to complain and defend in all courts of record and elsewhere—to take, hold, and purchase and convey real estate and personal property, to make all by-laws, rules and regulations not inconsistent with the laws and Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and at pleasure to alter or repeal the same, and to do all other acts and things incident to a corporation for religious purposes.

Article II – Purpose

The purpose of Goshen Baptist Church is to glorify God through His Son Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The basic functions of the Church which shall enable it to accomplish its purpose may be summarized as follows: to worship, teach, fellowship, encourage stewardship, minister, and evangelize.

- Worship is the experience of communion with the living and holy God which leads to praise and an awareness of His holiness, majesty and grace.
- Teaching is the instruction and application of the Bible in order to build up each member to maturity in Christ.
- Fellowship is participating with and encouraging other believers by openly expressing the love of Christ to each other.
- Stewardship is faithfully caring for what is God’s in the use of time, talents, and resources—both personal and corporate—in the service of Jesus Christ.
- Ministry is the meeting of spiritual and physical needs of the local church and the community at large in Jesus’ name.
- Evangelism is the presentation of the gospel in a clear, uncompromising way so that people in our communities, both local and worldwide, may come to a personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Article III – Statement of Faith

A. The Word of God

We believe all Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the verbally inspired Word of God, inerrant in the original writings, complete as the revelation of God's will for salvation, and the supreme and final authority in all matters to which they speak.

- B. The Trinity
We believe in one God, Creator and Sustainer of all things, eternally existing in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; that these are equal in every divine perfection and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence, and redemption.
- C. God the Father
We believe in God the Father, an infinite, personal Spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power, and love. We believe He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ.
- D. Jesus Christ
We believe that Jesus Christ is God's eternal Son, and has precisely the same nature, attributes and perfections as God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. We believe further that He is not only true God, but true man, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. We also believe in His sinless life, His substitutionary atonement, His bodily resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, His priestly intercession on behalf of His people, and His personal, visible, return from heaven.
- E. Holy Spirit
We believe in the Holy Spirit, His personhood, and His work in regeneration, sanctification, and preservation. His ministry is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, to implement Christ's work of redeeming the lost by convicting the world concerning sin, and to empower believers for godly living and service by guiding them into all spiritual truth.
- F. Man
We believe God created man, male and female, in the image of God and free from sin. We further believe man is a sinner by nature and choice and is therefore spiritually dead. We also believe that those who repent of sin and trust Jesus Christ as Savior are regenerated by the Holy Spirit.
- G. Salvation
We believe in salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. We further believe that this salvation is based upon the sovereign grace of God, and was purchased by Christ on the cross, and is received by man through faith, apart from any human merit, works, or ritual. We further believe salvation results in righteous living and good works.
- H. The Church
We believe that the Church is the spiritual body of which Christ is the head. We believe that the true Church is composed of all persons who have saving faith in Jesus Christ and have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. We believe that this body expresses itself in local assemblies whose members have confessed faith in Jesus Christ and have associated themselves for worship, for instruction, for evangelism, and for service. We believe the ordinances of this church are believer's baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper. We also believe in the interdependence of local churches and the mutual submission of believers to each other in love.
- I. Separation of Church and State
We believe that our church is and ought to be self-governing in function, and must be free from interference by any ecclesiastical or political authority. We further believe that every human being is directly responsible to God in matters of faith and life, and that each should be free to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience.
- J. Christian Conduct
We believe that the supreme task of every believer is to glorify God in his life; that his conduct should be blameless before the world; that he should be a faithful steward of his possessions; and that he should seek to realize for himself the full stature of maturity in Christ.
- K. Marriage
We believe God ordained marriage and the family as the foundational institution of human society, and that the only legitimate marriage is a sacred and permanent covenant relationship between one man and one woman, symbolizing the union of Christ and his Church.
- L. Last Things
We believe in the future return of Jesus Christ, the bodily resurrection of the saved and the lost, and the eternal existence of all people in heaven or hell, in divine judgments, rewards, and punishments.

Article IV - Covenant of the Goshen Baptist Church

Having been brought by Divine Grace to receive the Lord Jesus Christ and to commit our lives to Him, we do now solemnly covenant with each other that we will:

- walk together in brotherly love as becomes Christians;
- exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other;
- share each other's happiness and bear each other's burdens and sorrows;
- endeavor to bring up our children to know, love, and serve Jesus Christ;
- by pure and lovely example, endeavor to win our relatives and friends to the Savior;
- with God's help, live a holy and temperate life;
- regularly meet together for worship;
- strive together for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and service;
- support financially the work and ministry of this church;
- contribute regularly to the spread of the gospel at home and abroad;
- humbly and earnestly seek to live for the glory of Christ who has, by His sacrificial death, made possible our salvation.

Article V – Membership

The membership of this Church shall consist of persons who:

- confess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,
- give evidence of regeneration by living consistently with their profession and with the views of faith, doctrine and practice of this Church,
- have been baptized as believers,
- have been received into membership according to the by-laws of this Church.

Article VI – Leadership and Organization

- A. Under the authority of Jesus Christ and the Word of God, the members retain the final authority within this local church but delegate that authority to the Elders of the church. However, the vote of the membership of this church at a properly called meeting, as provided in the By-Laws, shall be required to effect the following actions:
 1. Accept members into the church;
 2. Confirm Elders, Deacons, and Deaconesses;
 3. Confirm church officers;
 4. Discipline members by dismissing them and discipline leaders by removing them from office;
 5. Approve annual budgets of the church, authorize any expenditure of the funds of the church when such expenditure is not covered by an approved budget, and approve any transactions regarding real property;
 6. Accept, reject, or otherwise dispose of any matter submitted to the membership of the church by the Elders, or raised by motion at a business meeting;
 7. Adopt, amend, or repeal the Constitution or By-Laws of this church;
 8. Approve the call and job description of Pastors and Non-pastoral Ministry Staff.
- B. The leadership of the church shall be vested in the Elders who are responsible for governing the church, protecting and teaching the Word, and tending the flock of God. The Elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function.
- C. Deacons and Deaconesses shall assist the Elders by performing services of advice, administration and

implementation.

- D. Elders, Deacons, and Deaconesses will lovingly govern, care for, and equip the membership to do the work of the ministry.
- E. The officers of the church are financial secretary, treasurer, assistant treasurer, and church clerk. They shall serve the church and assist the Elders in the conduct of official church business.

Article VII – Church Property

The real estate of the corporation shall not be sold by the Elders, nor subjected by them to any lien, by mortgage or judgment, without the written consent of three-fourths of the members present at a regular or special meeting, provided at least 25% of the membership is present, held after notice from the pulpit on two consecutive Sundays that the subject of sale or lien, as the case may be, will be considered and acted on at such meeting. The Elders may, however, and they are hereby empowered, subject to the restrictions and limitations in the preceding portion of this article imposed, to mortgage the real estate of the corporation, or encumber the same by judgment for money borrowed or debts contracted by them for the use and benefit of the corporation.

Upon the dissolution of the corporation, its assets remaining after payment, or provision for payment, of all debts and liabilities of this corporation shall be distributed to a nonprofit fund, foundation, or corporation which is organized and operated exclusively as a Christian, evangelical church.

Article VIII – Amendments

Revisions, additions or amendments of this constitution may be made only in the following manner:

- 1) At any regular or special business meeting; and
- 2) By a majority vote of the membership, or a three-fourths majority of those members present and voting at such meeting, provided at least 25% of the membership of the church is present at such meeting; and
- 3) After presentation by written motion at a regular or special business meeting held at least four weeks prior to the meeting; and
- 4) After written notice of the proposed changes or addition has been distributed to the church membership at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

By-Laws

Article I – Membership

Section 1—Qualifications

Any person professing faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, giving evidence of change of heart, and having accepted the faith, aims and ideals of this Church as expressed in the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant, may be received into membership after baptism as a believer, upon recommendation of the Elders.

Section 2—Process for Membership

Before being accepted as members of Goshen Baptist Church, all candidates for membership must:

- 1) Participate in new member orientation;
- 2) Be interviewed and give evidence of meeting the qualifications for membership.

To be admitted into church membership, applicants shall be recommended by the Elders for admission and accepted by vote of the members at any regular or special meeting of the members, and shall at that point relinquish their membership in other churches.

Section 3—Duties and Privileges of Membership

In accord with the duties enumerated in the Church Covenant, each member shall be privileged to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God.

Since final authority rests with the membership, it is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend all regular or special business meetings and vote on decisions regarding church leadership, membership status, and such other matters as may be presented for a vote.

Section 4—Church Discipline

Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and the example of Scripture. Church discipline, then, should ordinarily be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed. The aim of such discipline is the restoration of the believer to a right relationship with Christ and this church, and to safeguard the purity of the church.

Section 5—Termination of Membership

The church shall recognize the termination of a person's membership following his or her death. Additionally, members who have voluntarily resigned or joined with another church shall be removed from membership of this church. A letter of recommendation for membership may be sent to another church upon written request from that church. The Elders are empowered to remove people from membership due to inactivity according to policy.

Article II – Meetings

Section 1—Worship Meetings

Public services shall be held on Sundays and at other times, as determined by the Elders for the advancement of the work of the church. The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated either on the first Sunday of each month or at such other times as the Elders may determine.

Section 2—Business Meetings

- a) Regular business meetings will be held each quarter of the year and will be scheduled at least one month in advance. The church business year shall be the calendar year. Special business meetings may be called by the Elders, the Senior Pastor, or by at least ten percent of the membership of the church making a written notice to the Elders.
- b) The agenda for any business meeting shall be published in writing at least two Sundays before the meeting. Motions relating to substantive matters to be presented at a business meeting must be published at least two Sundays before the meeting. Substantive matters shall be those of major importance including, but not limited to, approval of the annual budget, borrowing money, and calling of pastoral and other ministry staff.
- c) An Elder shall preside as moderator at all business meetings of the church.
- d) Ten percent of the membership shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. All members eighteen years of age and over are eligible to vote whenever a vote by the church is required. Non-members and members younger than eighteen years of age are welcomed as guests at business meetings and may participate in discussion at the invitation of the moderator.
- e) All business meetings shall be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order.

Article III – Church Staff

Section 1 – Senior Pastor

- a) Duties and Responsibilities

The duties and responsibilities of the Senior Pastor shall be stated in the position description approved by the Elders. He shall be an ex officio voting member of the Elders.

- b) Selection and Call

In the event of a vacancy in the office of Senior Pastor, the Elders shall appoint a Pastor Search Committee to seek out and recommend to the Elders, who shall then recommend to the church, a person who meets the qualifications of Elder and fits the needs of the church. The Elders shall inform the church of the names of the members of the Pastor Search Committee. The decision to call a Senior Pastor shall take place at a business meeting set aside especially for that purpose. The extension of a call shall be made upon an affirmative vote of three-fourths of the members present and voting at this meeting, provided at least 25% of the membership of the church is present at such meeting. The vote shall be by secret ballot.

- c) Interim Leadership

The Elders shall be responsible for the duties and responsibilities of the Senior Pastor until a new Senior Pastor has started his ministry.

- d) Termination

The Senior Pastor shall serve under a continuing call until the pastoral relationship is dissolved at the request of the Senior Pastor or the church. The Senior Pastor is requested to give at least ninety days' advance notice in writing of his intention to resign his position, unless otherwise mutually agreed.

If two-thirds of the active Elders are convinced that it would be in the best interest of the Senior Pastor and the church to dissolve the relationship, the Elders shall call a special meeting of the Elders and the Senior Pastor to resolve the differences. If agreement cannot be reached, two-thirds of the active Elders may call a special business meeting in order to recommend to the church that the membership vote to terminate the pastoral relationship. If three-fourths of the members present and voting at this meeting (provided at least 25% of the membership of the church is present at such meeting) vote to terminate the relationship, the senior pastoral call shall end.

Section 2 – Additional Pastoral Staff

The church may call additional pastoral staff members when it is in the best interest of the ministry of the church.

a) Duties and Responsibilities

The duties and responsibilities for these positions will be formulated by the Senior Pastor or other members of the pastoral staff, and approved by the Elders. Additional pastoral staff must meet the qualifications of elder.

b) Selection and Call

The Elders shall appoint a search committee to recommend a person to fill a given position. The Search Committee shall present recommendations to the Elders for approval. The Elders will then recommend the person to the church at a business meeting. A two-thirds vote of those members present and voting shall be necessary for the confirmation of the nominee.

c) Termination

Pastoral staff shall serve under continuing call until the church or the staff members' request otherwise. The Staff member must give at least thirty days' advance notice in writing of his intention to resign his position, unless otherwise mutually agreed upon. A majority of the Elders, which shall include the Senior Pastor, can terminate a pastoral staff member when convinced that such action will be in the best interests of the ministry of the church. Such action shall be reported to the congregation.

Section 3 – Other Church Staff

The church may employ other church staff as it deems in the best interest of the ministry of the church. The duties and responsibilities for these positions will be determined by the Elders.

a) Selection of Non-pastoral Ministry Staff

The selection of non-pastoral staff involved in ministry (e.g., youth ministries director, children's ministries director) shall be recommended by the Elders and approved by the church at a business meeting. A two-thirds vote of those members present and voting shall be necessary for the confirmation of the nominee.

b) Termination of Non-pastoral Ministry Staff

Non-pastoral Ministry Staff shall serve until the church or the staff member's request otherwise. The Staff member must give at least thirty days' advance notice in writing of his intention to resign his position, unless otherwise mutually agreed upon. A majority of the Elders, which shall include the Senior Pastor, can terminate a Non-pastoral Ministry Staff member when convinced that such action will be in the best interests of the ministry of the church. Such action shall be reported to the congregation.

c) Support Staff

The selection or termination of support staff (e.g., secretarial personnel) shall be approved by the Elders.

Article IV – Elders, Deacons and Deaconesses

Section 1 – Elders

a) Responsibilities

The fundamental responsibility of the Elders is to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. The Elders are responsible for governing the church, preaching and teaching the Word, and shepherding the congregation. Specific responsibilities of the Elders shall include:

- Conducting worship services
- Administering the ordinances of the Gospel

- Equipping the membership of the church for the work of the ministry
 - Teaching the whole Word of God both formally and informally
 - Correcting error
 - Coordinating, overseeing and promoting the ministries of the church
 - Mobilizing the church for world mission
 - Overseeing the work of the Deacons/Deaconesses and committees
 - Examining prospective members and acquainting them with the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant
 - Examining prospective candidates for office
 - Scheduling and providing a moderator for business meetings
 - Providing for recording and reporting of official church business
- b) Qualifications
- Serving Elders shall be selected from the male members of Goshen Baptist Church and meet the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in 1 Timothy 2:8-15; 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4.
- c) Term
- Elders shall serve three-year terms and no more than two consecutive terms without being inactive for at least one year. The Senior Pastor shall always serve as an active Elder.
- d) Number
- The number of serving Elders shall be not fewer than five men. The number of Elders shall be determined by the serving Elders according to need and the availability of qualified men. Elders who are paid pastors shall be referred to as 'Vocational Elders'. All other Elders shall be referred to as 'Lay Elders'. The number of Lay Elders shall exceed the number of Vocational Elders.
- e) Organization
- The Elders shall organize themselves however they determine to best achieve the mission of the Church. The Elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function. The Elders shall ordinarily meet at least once per month. Meetings of the Elders may be held at any location and may be conducted by means of electronic communication through which the Elders may simultaneously hear each other. A quorum for meetings of the Elders is defined as at least one-half of the Elders. The Elders shall select a Chairman and Vice-Chairman from among the Lay Elders.
- f) Selection
- Selections will take place annually, and at other times when the serving Elders determine that new elders are needed. The serving Elders will supervise the selection process:
- a) The selection process shall include a nomination process. Notice of the beginning of the nomination process shall be given to the congregation. Nominations shall be received from the membership for at least two weeks from the date of notice.
 - b) A nomination review committee composed of the Elders, the Chairman of the Deacons/Deaconesses, and one additional Deacon/Deaconess will review the nominations. The Chairman of the Elders will chair the committee. After examining the candidates' qualifications, the committee will prepare a list of willing men and present them to the Church for confirmation at a business meeting. Confirmation requires a two-thirds vote of those members present and voting at the meeting.
- g) Committees
- The Elders shall establish Committees to assist in the performance of duties. The chairman of each

committee shall be appointed by the Elders.

Section 2 – Deacons/Deaconesses

a) Responsibilities

The Deacons/Deaconesses shall advise and be ready to assist the Elders in any service that shall support and promote the ministry of the Word, ministries of the church, and the care of the congregation. The responsibilities of the Deacons/Deaconesses may include:

- Administering a fund to assist in meeting needs of individuals and families
- Coordinating the greeting and welcoming ministries of the church
- Assisting in administering the ordinances of the Gospel
- Assisting at fellowship gatherings of the church
- Caring for and maintaining the church properties
- Administering the business affairs of the church that pertain to its material assets
- Serving the church by helping to meet practical needs

b) Qualifications

Male members of this church may serve as Deacons and female members may serve as Deaconesses. No person may simultaneously serve as both Elder and Deacon. Deacons/Deaconesses shall meet the qualifications for the office set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

c) Term

Deacons/Deaconesses shall serve three-year terms.

d) Number

The Elders shall determine the number of Deacons/Deaconesses based on the needs of the ministry and qualifications of men and women in the church.

e) Organization

The Deacons/Deaconesses shall organize themselves however they determine to be best to achieve the mission of the Church. A member of the Deacons will serve as Chairman of the Deacons/Deaconesses. Meetings of the Deacons/Deaconesses or sub-committees thereof shall be held as needed to best fulfill the responsibilities of the Deacons/Deaconesses.

f) Selection

Selections will take place annually, and at other times when the serving Elders determine that additional Deacons/Deaconesses are needed. The serving Elders will supervise the selection process:

- a) The selection process shall include a nomination process. Notice of the beginning of the nomination process shall be given to the congregation. Nominations shall be received from the membership for at least two weeks from the date of notice.
- b) A nomination review committee composed of the Elders, the Chairman of the Deacons/Deaconesses, and one additional Deacon/Deaconess will review the nominations. The Chairman of the Elders will chair the committee. After examining the candidates' qualifications, the committee will prepare a list of willing individuals and present them to the Church for confirmation at a business meeting. Confirmation requires two-thirds vote of those members present and voting at the meeting.

Article V - Officers

- a) The Chairman of the Elders shall serve as president of Goshen Baptist Church

- b) In addition, the officers of Goshen Baptist Church shall consist of a clerk, treasurer, assistant treasurer, and financial secretary.
- c) Selection of the clerk, treasurer, assistant treasurer, and financial secretary will take place annually. The serving Elders will supervise the selection process:
 - a. The selection process shall include a nomination process. Notice of the beginning of the nomination process shall be given to the congregation. Nominations shall be received from the membership for at least two weeks from the date of notice. All candidates shall be church members.
 - b. The nomination review committee composed of the Elders, the Chairman of the Deacons/Deaconesses, and one additional Deacon/Deaconess will review the nominations. The Chairman of the Elders will chair the committee. After examining the candidates' qualifications, the committee will prepare a list of willing individuals and present them to the Church for confirmation at a business meeting. Confirmation requires two-thirds vote of those members present and voting at the meeting.
- d) All officers shall assume office at the beginning of the church business year and shall remain in office until their successors have been installed.
- e) Duties:

President: shall represent Goshen Baptist Church in all legal matters

Clerk: shall keep a record of the proceedings of all business meetings of the church, keep a complete registry of membership, issue letters as authorized by the church, and preserve all documents received during the term of office. These records shall become a continuous history of the church.

Treasurer: shall be responsible for all funds of the church. The treasurer shall make disbursements as directed by the Elders and/or congregation and shall submit at each regular business meeting a report of the financial condition of the church.

Assistant Treasurer: shall assist the treasurer and shall also be empowered to make disbursements as directed by the Elders and/or congregation. In the event of a vacancy occurring in the office of treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer shall accede to the office of treasurer and so serve for the remainder of the term of office.

Financial Secretary: shall record and administer the envelope contribution system and submit reports thereof at the regular business meeting.

Article VI – Amendments

Revisions, additions or amendments of these bylaws may be made only in the following manner:

- 1) At any regular or special business meeting; and
- 2) By a majority vote of the membership, or a three-fourths majority of those members present and voting at such meeting, provided at least 25% of the membership of the church is present at such meeting; and
- 3) After presentation by written motion at a regular or special business meeting held at least four weeks prior to the meeting; and
- 4) After written notice of the proposed changes or addition has been distributed to the church membership at least two weeks prior to the meeting.