

# CORNERSTONE BAPTIST CHURCH

## CONSTITUTION WITH PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

### Preamble

Desiring to glorify God in a biblical ministry, recognizing the preeminence of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Word of God, and pursuing the unity and order Scripture demands, we do hereby ordain and establish this constitution for the operation of our local church by the grace of God.

### Article I—Name

This organization shall be known as Cornerstone Baptist Church of Greenville County.

### Article II—Purpose

Under the Headship of Jesus Christ, Cornerstone Baptist Church strives to obey God's Word by exalting the Lord in worship, edifying the saints through preaching and teaching of Christian doctrine and ethics, and evangelizing the lost. The church may accomplish this through regular meetings, special services, education, care, missionary outreach, and any other ministries or activities that the church shall deem appropriate or necessary. This church shall operate as a non-profit organization exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Revenue Law).

### Article III—Declaration of Faith

#### Section 1: Scripture

We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. Since the Scriptures are God-breathed in the original autographs, inspiration extends to the very words of the Bible so that the entire Bible, and only the Bible, is the Word of God. As such, the Bible is infallible, inerrant, and our only rule of faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21; Mat. 5:18; John 10:35; Rev. 22:18-19).

#### Section 2: God

We believe in one Triune God, eternally existing as one in His essence yet three in His persons. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are co-eternal in being, co-identical in nature, and co-equal in power and glory (Deut. 6:4; Ps. 90:2; Mat. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Cor. 8:6).

- A. God the Father. He is eternal, immutable, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. He is the sovereign God of the universe, the Creator and Preserver of all things. He is perfect in holiness, righteousness, justice and love. Having extended His grace and mercy to people by sending His Son to die in their place, He desires to have fellowship with them (Ps. 65:2; 139:1-24; 1 Chr. 29:11; John 1:12; 3:16; Eph. 1:3-9; Rom. 11:36).
- B. Jesus Christ. He is the Son of God. He is one Person, with both a divine nature (He is truly God) and a human nature (He is truly man). He existed from everlasting with the Father, was born of a virgin when He took on human flesh, lived a sinless life, and gave Himself willingly on the cross for the sins of people. He arose from the tomb on the third day, ascended to the Father, and will return to earth one day as Judge and King (John 1:1-3, 18; 5:22-23; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Heb. 1:3, 6, 8; 9:24; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:15-20; 2 Cor. 5:21; Mat. 25:31; Rev. 19:11-20:6; 1 John 2:2).
- C. Holy Spirit. He is a divine Person and not an impersonal force. He is fully God, proceeding from the Father and the Son. The work of the Holy Spirit included creation and the inspiration of the Scriptures. He calls people to salvation through Christ and dwells in the hearts of believers (Mat. 28:19; John 16:7-14; Tit. 3:5; Eph. 1:13; 5:18; Rom. 8:9-16, 26).

### **Section 3: Creation**

We believe the Genesis account of the creation of the world is a historical record of the direct acts of God in six literal days, without the involvement of any evolutionary process (Gen. 1-2; John 1:3-10; Col. 1:16; Heb. 11:3).

### **Section 4: Mankind**

We believe that man was created in innocence and in the image of God. However, in Adam's disobedience, sin entered the world and passed to all mankind destroying their relationship with God and resulting in death. Thus, all are sinners by nature and by choice, and therefore are under just condemnation without defense or excuse, and deserving eternal punishment in hell (Gen. 1-3; Rom. 3:10-12, 23; 5:12; 8:7-8; Eph. 2:1-3; John 6:44; 1 John 4:19; Is. 64:6; Jer. 17:9).

### **Section 5: Salvation**

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly by grace through faith alone in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, and that all who repent and believe, receiving Him as Savior, are regenerated by the Holy Spirit and become children of God (Eph. 2:8-9; John 1:29; 1 John 2:2; Is. 53:4-12).

- A. Regeneration. When an individual responds in faith to the gospel, repents of his sin and turns to Christ for salvation, the Holy Spirit causes a spiritual change in which he is freed from the guilt of his inherently sinful nature, receives the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and thus is born again into God's family. Regeneration involves an illumination of the mind, a change in the will and a new nature (John 3:3-7, 16; 1:12; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 3:22-28; 1 Pet. 1:23; Tit. 3:5; Acts 2:38; 17:30).
- B. Justification. This is the act of God whereby He declares the sinner to be righteous in His sight. On the basis of the substitutionary work of Christ, God does not impute sin to the individual, imputing instead the righteousness of Christ (Rom. 3:22-28; 4:1-8; 5:1-2; Gal. 2:16).
- C. Sanctification. Whereas regeneration is a one-time event in the life of the believer, sanctification is a continuing process by which God gradually transforms him into the image of Christ. With God's help, the believer also actively participates in this process by responding in obedience to God's Word and the Holy Spirit. This process will be completed when believers join Christ in heaven, perfected in holiness (John 17:17; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 5:26; Phil. 1:6; Phil. 2:12-13; 1 John 3:2; Acts 20:32).
- D. Preservation. Since salvation is based solely upon the grace of God and not on the merit of the individual, everyone who truly accepts Christ as Savior is eternally secure in his salvation and is kept by God's power. Scripture, however, gives a solemn warning to those who profess salvation but whose lives give no evidence of change because of the willful, continual practice of sin (John 6:37, 39; 10:27-30; Rom. 8:38-39; 1 Pet. 1:5; 2 Pet. 1:10; 1 John 3:7-10; James 2:14-26).

### **Section 6: The Church**

We believe that the church, composed of all who have trusted Christ as Savior since Pentecost, is the body of Christ. Christ Himself is the Head of the church. This spiritual organism is the universal aspect of the church (Mat. 16:18; Eph. 1:23)

- A. Organization. The local church is an organized assembly of baptized believers voluntarily associated together in the faith in order to exalt the Lord in worship, evangelize the lost through witness, and edify the saints through teaching, fellowship, and service. The local church has the absolute right of self-government and should be free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations, religious or governmental. Jesus Christ is the Head and Chief Shepherd (Eph. 4:11-16; Col. 1:15-20; 1 Pet. 5:4).
- B. Ordinances. Christ instructed the church to observe two ordinances, both of which are symbolical rather than sacramental or efficacious.
  1. Baptism. All who profess faith in Jesus Christ should be baptized by immersion in water as a symbol of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord (Mat. 28:19; Rom. 6:3-4).

2. The Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is a memorial service in which the bread and juice represent the body and blood of Christ (Mat. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23-34).

## **Section 7: Separation**

We believe that Scripture commands God's people to be holy, set apart *to* Him and *from* all polluting influences, including sin, disobedient brethren and false teachers.

- A. Personal. Individual believers are the temple of the Holy Spirit and so must be pure from sin. They are not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers nor found to be friends of the world (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; 1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4).
- B. Ecclesiastical. The church as a whole must separate from those who teach false doctrine and attempt to subvert the saints (Rom. 16:17; 2 Thes. 3:6-15; 2 John 9-11; 2 Cor. 6:14-18).

## **Section 8: Last Things**

We believe in the personal, bodily return of Jesus Christ; His literal, physical reign on earth for a thousand years, the eternal punishment of unbelievers in the lake of fire; and the eternal blessings for believers in God's presence on the new earth (Mat. 25:1-13; 1 Thes. 4:14-18; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Rev. 19:11-20:15; 21-22).

## **Section 9: Marriage, Family, and Sexuality**

- A. Marriage. We believe that Scripture defines marriage as a life-long, exclusive covenant between one man and one woman for the purpose of glorifying God and reflecting Christ's love. God actively establishes the marriage covenant by spiritually joining the couple and empowering them for service together (Gen. 2:24; Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:10; Eph. 5:22-23).
- B. Human Sexuality. We believe that God has reserved all sexual activity to the marriage covenant as defined above. Scripture teaches that all forms of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery and pornography are sinful perversions of God's plan for sexual intimacy. God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance (Gen. 2:24; 19:5, 13; 26:8-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1:26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4).
- C. Family Roles and Relationships. We believe that men and women are spiritually equal in position before God but that God has ordained distinct and separate spiritual functions for the men and women in the home and in the church.
  1. In the home. God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. The husband is to be the spiritual leader of the home. He is to love his wife as Christ loves the Church. The wife is to submit herself to the scriptural leadership of her husband as the church submits to the headship of Christ. Parents are responsible for teaching their children spiritual and moral values through consistent lifestyle example, biblical instruction and appropriate discipline, including biblical application of corporal correction (Gen. 1:26-28; Ex. 20:12; Deut. 6:4-9; Ps. 127:3-5; Prov. 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; Mk. 10:6-12; 1 Cor. 7:1-16; Eph. 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Col. 3:18-21; Heb. 13:4; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).
  2. In the church. Positions of biblical leadership and oversight in the church (pastors and deacons) are limited to men who meet the scriptural qualifications (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 3:4-5, 12).
- D. Divorce and Remarriage. We believe that God designed marriage to be a permanent union, extending until the death of a spouse. God disapproves of divorce. Although divorced persons may serve in the church and be greatly used of God, they are not eligible for the offices of pastor or deacon (Mal. 2:14-17; Matt. 19:3-12; Rom. 7:1-3; 1 Tim. 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6).

## Article IV—Membership

### Section 1: Admission

- A. Qualifications. A person may be admitted to the membership of this church who:
1. Gives testimony of conversion and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and has subsequently been baptized by immersion.
  2. Ascribes to the *Declaration of Faith* and agrees to uphold the *Constitution* of this church.
  3. Is willing to strive to live a life separated from the sins of the world consistent with the teachings of the Bible.
  4. Is willing to support the work of this church by participating regularly in worship and service.
- B. Procedure. Any person desiring membership at Cornerstone Baptist Church may make his request known to the pastor or a deacon. He shall then meet with the pastor, or a deacon designated by the pastor, to determine if he meets the qualifications for membership. If accepted, he shall be presented to the congregation during a regular church service for congregational approval and welcome.
- C. Associate Membership. For college students who reside locally on an extended but temporary basis, Cornerstone Baptist Church offers associate membership. Associate members retain their church membership at home but also enjoy the benefits of local church membership here for the duration of their residence (except they do not vote in church business meetings). The qualifications and procedures above apply for associate members.

### Section 2: Removal

A member of Cornerstone Baptist Church may be removed from the membership list for any of the following reasons:

- A. Request. An individual may be removed from the church membership based on a request from the member personally or a request for a letter from another church of like faith and practice. If an individual joins another church, he will be removed from the membership of Cornerstone Baptist Church even if a request is not received.
- B. Absence. The membership of any individual shall be automatically terminated without notice if the member in question has not attended regular worship services of the church in the preceding three months. The pastor and deacons may choose to waive this provision if, in their discretion, there is good cause for the absence.
- C. Death.
- D. Persistent sinful conduct. An individual may be removed from membership based on persistent sinful conduct that is clearly contrary to the teachings of the Bible (such as immorality or apostasy). This is an action taken by the church at the advice of the pastors and deacons. The church shall strive to follow the guidelines for church discipline as given in Scripture (Mat. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:11) in dealing with such a member. A member excluded from the church in this manner may be restored upon credible evidence of confession and repentance.

## Article V—Meetings

### Section 1: Meetings for Worship and Instruction

The church shall hold regular meetings for worship, service and fellowship on Sunday and a mid-week prayer meeting. The pastor may also arrange special meetings and conferences.

### Section 2: Meetings for Church Business

- A. Regular Business Meetings. The church shall conduct quarterly business meetings during a regular service in March, June and September. Announcements of such meetings shall be made on at least one Sunday before the meeting.
- B. Annual Business Meetings. The annual business meeting shall be held in January and announced at least two weeks in advance. At that time the church shall elect officers, adopt a

budget for the following year, and take up other pertinent matters of church business. The church fiscal year shall begin on January 1 and conclude on December 31.

- C. Special Business Meetings. Special business meetings may be called by the pastor or a majority of the deacons to consider matters which require action prior to the next regular business meeting. Announcement shall be made at least one Sunday in advance.
- D. Moderator. The pastor or his designee shall act as moderator at all business meetings of the church. In his absence or during a meeting for the pastor's dismissal, an assistant pastor, the chairman of the deacons, or another deacon appointed by the pastor may moderate.
- E. Voting. Members must be at least 18 years of age and in good standing to be eligible to vote. Not less than 51 percent of the active voting membership shall be considered a quorum. Voting shall be either open or secret at the discretion of the moderator. A three-fourths majority of all voting members present shall be required for passage of any item of business.

## **Article VI—Officers**

### **Section 1: Pastor**

- A. Qualifications. The pastor shall be a male who is ordained to the gospel ministry. He must meet the scriptural qualifications for the office set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-11. He must ascribe to the *Declaration of Faith*, the *Constitution* and any by-laws of this church.
- B. Authority. The senior pastor shall be the chief spiritual leader and chief administrative officer of the church. As such he shall be an *ex officio* member of every church committee and organization. He shall be responsible for all the church services, including the approval of speakers, music, and all other matters pertaining to the operation of the church. He shall be charged with the responsibility to preach the Word of God and administer the ordinances. As Christ's undershepherd, he is the overseer of all aspects of the church.
- C. Call and Tenure. A pulpit committee, composed of the deacons, shall seek and recommend a qualified man to be pastor of the church. Following careful examination and an opportunity to hear the man preach, the church shall vote on the candidate at a special business meeting. Only one candidate may be considered at a time, with a vote taken before considering another candidate. Once elected, he will continue to serve until he either resigns his office (with a thirty-day notice) or is dismissed by the church (with thirty days severance pay). Dismissal must be by congregational vote in a special business meeting called for that purpose.

### **Section 2: Staff**

In order to meet the needs of the church, the senior pastor is at liberty to fill positions, salaried and unsalaried, with personnel who are equipped for a particular task and meet the spiritual qualifications. Special pastoral staff positions, such as associate pastor, assistant pastor, music pastor, youth pastor, or outreach pastor shall be nominated by the pastor and deacons and approved by the church by vote. These positions are subject to the biblical qualifications above. Other positions, such as secretaries, custodians, and any others the pastor may deem necessary, shall be appointed by the pastors and deacons. Salaried personnel may be hired only after the congregation has allocated funds for that position in the budget. The senior pastor shall oversee all staff personnel, determine their responsibilities and maintain the right of dismissal.

### **Section 3: Deacons**

- A. Qualifications. Deacons shall be males who meet the scriptural qualifications for the office as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. They must have been members of the church for at least six months.
- B. Responsibilities. According to the pattern set forth in Acts 6:1-6, the deacons shall assist the pastor in every aspect of ministry in the church. They shall recognize the pastor as the leader of the church and advise him in matters spiritual and secular that pertain to the operation of the church. The pastor shall serve as moderator at all deacons' meetings, although he may designate a deacon to serve as facilitator. The deacons may elect a chairman who shall serve for a term of one year. The deacons shall direct the operation of the church in the absence of a

pastor, including the search for a new pastor. The deacons shall be the legal agents of the church and act in this capacity only at the direction of the pastors and congregation.

- C. Election and Tenure. The pastor will invite church members to submit nominations for deacons based on the number of vacancies. From that list, the pastor and deacons will submit candidates to the congregation for vote. Upon election, a deacon shall serve for three years. The number of deacons shall be determined by the pastors and deacons according to the needs of the church.

#### **Section 4: Other Officers**

- A. Clerk. The clerk shall keep the minutes of each business meeting and present those minutes to the congregation at the following business meeting. The clerk shall be custodian of the membership roll and other official (non-financial) documents of the church. The pastors and deacons shall appoint the clerk.
- B. Treasurer. The treasurer shall keep an accurate account of all receipts and disbursements and present a financial report at each regular business meeting. The pastor and deacons shall appoint the treasurer. The treasurer, pastor, and any other designee appointed by the pastor shall be authorized to sign church checks.
- C. Financial Records Secretary. The financial records secretary shall keep a record of all monetary gifts and provide a copy to each individual contributor of his own annual contributions. The pastors and deacons shall appoint the financial records secretary. The records and personal knowledge of the financial records secretary shall be confidential.

### **Article VII—Committees**

The pastors and deacons shall appoint special committees as the need arises, which shall serve under their direction and authority.

### **Article VIII—Ministries**

All ministries of the church are under the authority of the pastors and deacons and are subject to their approval. The pastors shall oversee all Bible Fellowship Classes, including the selection of staff and teachers.

### **Article IX—Standards for Workers**

Since the officers and others who serve in the ministries of the church occupy positions of authority and responsibility, they are expected to observe high standards of Christian conduct as examples for the rest of the membership. For that reason, all officers and workers in the church shall be expected to abide by the standards of modesty, decency, and Christian testimony as set by the pastors and deacons.

### **Article X—Ordination**

A male member of Cornerstone Baptist Church who believes that God has called him to preach may apply for ordination to the gospel ministry. He must demonstrate that call by the possession of gifts and graces belonging to the ministry and by adequate preparation. If he is approved, the church shall call an ordination council moderated by the pastor and composed of pastoral staff, deacons and/or other ordained ministers invited by the pastor. They shall examine the candidate with regard to his doctrinal soundness, moral and spiritual qualifications, and manifestation of spiritual gifts. This meeting shall be open to all church members, who will have an opportunity to ask questions after the council has finished. After satisfactory examination and recommendation by the council, the church will vote on the ordination of the candidate during a church service.

## **Article XI—Financial Support Policy**

The financial needs of this church shall be met by the voluntary giving of tithes, offerings and contributions by its members and friends (Mal. 3:8-10; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7). The church shall not resort to entertainments, suppers, bingo, raffles, etc., for the purpose of raising funds. Contributors may suggest uses for their contributions, but all designations shall be deemed advisory rather than mandatory in nature. All contributions made to specific funds or otherwise designated shall remain subject to the exclusive control and discretion of the pastors and deacons. No fiduciary obligation shall be created by any designated contribution made to the church other than to use the contribution for the general furtherance of any of the purposes stated in Article II.

## **Article XII—Affiliation**

### **Section 1: Autonomy**

This church is an independent Baptist church that is totally self-governing and subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body.

### **Section 2: Authority**

The authority for the government of this church is vested in its membership.

### **Section 3: Association**

This church shall not hold organized affiliation with any association, convention, conference, or council of churches. This church will, however, recognize and sustain the obligations of mutual conviction, counsel and cooperation which are common among independent fundamental churches and seek to maintain fellowship with those organizations which consistently uphold the truth of God's Word and the spirit of this Constitution.

## **Article XIII—Amendments**

Amendments to this Constitution, with exceptions noted in Section 1, may be adopted only by a three-fourths majority vote of the congregation at any regular or special meeting, provided that such amendment be distributed in written form to the membership at least two weeks prior to that congregational meeting.

## **Article XIV—Dissolution of Corporation**

In the event of the dissolution of Cornerstone Baptist Church as a non-profit organization, the assets of this church shall be given to other non-profit organizations of like faith and order which would satisfy the remaining membership and qualify under the provision and regulations of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Revenue Law).