

Star of Bethlehem Constitution

Upon adoption of this Constitution and By-laws any previous Constitution and By-laws shall be automatically rescinded.

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 applies to each individual church member and the freedom of action of this body in its relation to other churches.

Article I

NAME AND PRINCIPAL LOCATION

The legal name of this Church is The Centennial Star of Bethlehem Baptist Church. The principal office shall be located at 304 Spring Street, Ossining, NY, 10562. The Church will be referred to as the Star of Bethlehem Baptist Church, or Star. The church is a non-profit, charitable institution functioning within the parameters of the government's guidelines as found in Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Revenue Law). No member will profit financially from the church's assets.

Article II

MISSION

The mission of this church shall be to maintain Public Worship of God, to develop Christian character, to strengthen our fellowship, to encourage Evangelistic activity, and meet the needs of our community. We will work for the liberation of persons spiritually, physically, socially, economically, and civically as governed by the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Article III

ARTICLES OF FAITH

THE SCRIPTURES - 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 opinion shall be tried.

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, inexpressively 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.

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

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; 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 the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections, He is in every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all sufficient Savior.

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 principle 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.

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 that 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.

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 affected 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.

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.

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 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.

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 a 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.

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.

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.

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.

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 Savior, 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 the dying love of Christ; preceded always by solemn self-examination.

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.

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.

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.

THE WORLD TO COME - We believe the Scriptures teach 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 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.

Article IV

CHURCH COVENANT

The church covenant is a voluntary agreement by the members of our congregation whereby we commit to conduct our lives in such a way as to glorify the Lord God and promote the ongoing ministry of the church of Jesus Christ. The covenant outlines the obligations and Christian character of church unity and family.

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our 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, angels, 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, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and

spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintance; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drink as a beverage, 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 each other in prayer, to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of the 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.

And now unto Him, who brought again from the dead, Our Lord Jesus, be Power and Glory forever. Amen.

Article V

ASSOCIATIONS

Star of Bethlehem Baptist Church shall be an independent autonomous church subject only to Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. It has the right to cooperate and support other associations, conventions, fellowships, and organizations as may be approved by the Senior Pastor and Executive Council of the Church.

- A. **Local Associations** – Churches in a limited area come together to meet and work together through Baptist associations. These churches agree to cooperate in the association and meet periodically with each other; where one church acts as the host. At these meetings, reports are heard, sermons are preached, addresses delivered, Christian education and other area of mutual interest are discussed. (e.g. Central Hudson Baptist Association, Mid-Hudson Baptist Association)
- B. **State Conventions** – A more general organization extending over and embracing the fields of all the associations in the state. It is a missionary organization, it helps to support the weaker churches, supports the missionaries in neighborhoods of special need, in connection with the associations and churches. Provides leadership in Christian education, evangelism, missionary promotion, ministerial education, and many other fields. Holds semi-annual meetings, alternating among different sections of the state, chiefly larger churches, and communities where facilities are adequate for the many who attend (e.g. Empire Missionary

Baptist Convention, American Baptist Churches of New York State).

C. **National Convention** – A larger organization working in the same fashion as the State, some of the same of the most common functions are: Foreign Mission, Urban and Rural church work, ministerial pension funds, Christian education program planning and cooperation with schools, colleges, and campus Christian work, prison ministry. (e.g. National Baptist Convention U.S.A., Inc., American Baptist Churches, Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention).

Article VI

DISSOLUTION

The Church is deemed in a dissolution state when it is unable to effectively function according to the Church's purpose and mission statement. Provisions shall be made to pay all liabilities associated with the Church. None of its assets or holdings shall be divided among the members or any other individuals but shall be irrevocably designated to a vote of 2/3 of the active membership, present and voting, to dissolution to such other non-profit religious corporations as are in agreement with the covenant adopted by this Church, and in conformity with the requirements of the United States Internal Revenue Service Code of 1954, Section 501 C-3.

Article VII

AMENDMENT OF CONSTITUTION

It is the responsibility of the Senior Pastor and the Executive Council to review the constitution at least once every five years (5) years and propose any revisions or adjustments necessary to maintain their effectiveness, and to bring these changes to the Church in a church Meeting. The congregation shall be given two weeks advance notice of the time of such meeting. Further, a copy of the proposed changes shall be made available to members at two consecutive weeks of corporate worship services in advance of the meeting.

This Constitution may be amended by a vote of 2/3 of the active membership, present at a regular or special meeting.