

CONSTITUTION

Revised: May 19, 2021

Bethel Baptist Church

300 North Jensen Road
Vestal, New York 13850

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Constitution

Bethel Baptist Church
300 North Jensen Road, Vestal, New York

Preamble

The Holy Spirit, speaking through the Apostle Paul says, “Let all things be done decently and in order.” For the purpose of carrying out this command in serving the Lord Jesus Christ, the following rules of procedure are adopted.

Article I. Name

This organization shall be known as the Bethel Baptist Church.

Article II. Purpose

The purpose of this church shall be to promote the preaching of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in this community and around the world in obedience to the Savior’s commission as recorded in Matthew 28:19, 20; to instruct believers in the Word of God; to maintain regular services of worship and study; to administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper as set forth in the New Testament; to contribute to the knowledge, comfort, fellowship, discipline, and holy living of God’s people. Bethel Baptist Church is a New York Corporation and operates under the laws of the State of New York.

Article III. Covenant

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 Ghost, 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 give it a sacred pre-eminence over all institutions of human origin;
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 devotions;
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 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 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.

Article IV. Articles of Faith

I. Of the Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible as originally written was verbally inspired and the product of Spirit-controlled men, and therefore has truth without any admixture of error for its matter. We believe the Bible to be the true center of Christian Union and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, and creeds, and opinions, shall be tried. 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

II. Of the True God

We believe there is one and only one living and true God, an infinite Spirit, 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. Ex. 20:2, 3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Rev. 4:11.

III. Of the Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, [equal] with God the Father and God the Son and of the same nature; that He was active in the creation; that in His relation to the unbelieving world He restrains the evil one until God's purpose is fulfilled; that He convicts of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; that He bears witness to the Truth of the Gospel in preaching and testimony; that He is the agent in the New Birth; that He seals, endues, guides, teaches, witnesses, sanctifies, and helps the believer. John 14:16-17; Matt. 28:19; Heb. 9:14; John 14:26; Luke 1:35; Gen. 1:2; John 16:8-11; Acts 5:30-32; John 3:5, 6; Eph. 1:13, 14; Mark 1:8; John 1:33; Acts 11:16; Luke 24:49; Rom. 8:14, 16, 26-27.

IV. Of the Devil, or Satan

We believe in the personality of Satan, that he is the unholy god of this age, and the author of all the powers of darkness and is destined to the judgment of an eternal justice in the lake of fire. Matt. 4:1-3; 2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 20:10.

V. Of the Creation

We accept the Genesis account of creation and believe that man came by direct creation of God and not by evolution. Gen. 1-2; Col. 1:16, 17; John 1:3.

VI. Of the Fall of Man

We believe that man was created in innocence under the law of his Maker, but by voluntary transgression fell from his sinless and happy state in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not only by constraint but of choice; and therefore under just condemnation without defense or excuse. Gen. 3:1-6; 24; Rom. 1:18, 32; 5:10-19.

VII. Of the Virgin Birth

We believe that Jesus was begotten of the Holy Ghost in a miraculous manner, born of Mary, a virgin, as no other man was ever born or can ever be born of woman, and that He is both the Son of God and God, the Son. Gen. 3:15; Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:35; John 1:4.

VIII. Of the Atonement for Sin

We believe 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 and vicarious atonement for our sins; that His atonement consisted not in setting us an example by His death as a martyr, but was a voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinner's place, the Just dying for the unjust; Christ the Lord, bearing our sin in His own body on the tree, that having risen from the dead, He is now enthroned in Heaven, and uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfection, He is in every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all sufficient Savior. Eph. 2:8; Acts 15:11; Rom. 3:24; John 3:16; Matt. 18:11; Phil. 2:7; Heb. 2:14; Isa. 53:4-7; Rom. 3:25; 1 John 4:10; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21.

IX. Of Grace in the New Creation

We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be born again; that the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus; that it is instantaneous and not a process; that in the new birth the one dead in trespasses and in sins is made a partaker of the divine nature and receives eternal life, the free gift of God; that the new creation is brought about in a manner above our comprehension, solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel, that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith and newness of life. John 3:3; 2 Cor. 5:15; 1 John 5:1; John 3:6, 7; Acts 16:30-33; 2 Peter 1:4; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1; 2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 2:13; John 3:8.

X. Of Justification

We believe that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in Him is Justification:

a. That Justification includes the pardon of sin, and the gift of eternal life, on principles of righteousness;

b. 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, His righteousness is imputed to us. Acts 13:39; Isa. 53:11; Zech. 13:1; Rom. 8:1; Rom. 5:1, 9.

XI. Of Faith and Salvation

We believe that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only condition of salvation. Acts 16:31.

XII. Of the Local Church

We believe that a local church is a congregation of immersed believers, associated by covenant of 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 officers are pastors and deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties, are clearly defined in the Scriptures; we believe the true Mission of the church is the faithful witnessing of Christ to all men as we have opportunity. We hold that the local church has the absolute right of self government free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations; and that the one and only superintendent is Christ through the Holy Spirit; that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of the Gospel; that each local church is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation; on all matters of membership, of policy, of government, of discipline, of benevolence, the will of the local church is final. Acts 2:41, 42; 1 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 1:22, 23; 4:11; Acts 20:17-28; 2 Tim. 3:17; Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23, 24; Acts 15:13-18.

XIII. Of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe that Christian Baptism is the immersion of a believer in water 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. We believe that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration of His death until He comes and should be preceded always by solemn self-examination. 1 Cor. 11:2; Acts 8:26-39; John 3:23; Rom. 6:3-5; Matt. 3:16; Col. 2:12.

XIV. Of the Security of the Saints

We believe that all who are truly born again are kept by God the Father for Jesus Christ. Phil. 1:6; John 10:28, 29; Rom. 8:35-39; Jude 1 (R. V.).

XV. Of the Righteous and the Wicked

We believe 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 Christ, and Sanctified by the Holy 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, in the everlasting felicity of the saved and the everlasting conscious suffering of the lost. Mal. 3:18; Gen. 18:23; Rom. 6:17, 18; 1 John 5:19; Rom. 7:6, 6:23; Prov. 14:32; Luke 6:5; Matt. 25:34-41; John 8:21.

XVI. Of Civil Government

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment for the interests and good order of human society; and that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored, and obeyed; except in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the only Lord of the conscience and the coming Prince of the Kings of the earth. Rom. 13:1-7; 2 Sam. 23:3; Exod. 18:21, 22; Acts 23:5; 5:20, 4:20.

XVII. Of the Resurrection, Personal, Visible, Premillennial Return of Christ and the Related Events

- a. We believe in the Bodily Resurrection. Matt. 28:6, 7; Luke 24:39; 2-6; John 20:27; 1 Cor. 15:4; Mark 16:6.
- b. The Ascension. Acts 1:9-11; Luke 24:51; Mark 16:19; Rev. 3:21; Heb. 12:2.
- c. The High Priesthood. Heb. 8:6; 2:17; 5:9, 10; 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 2:1.

- d. The Second Coming. John 14:3; Acts 1:11; James 5:8; Heb. 9:28.
- e. The Resurrection of the Righteous Dead. 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:42-44, 52.
- f. The Change of the Living in Christ. 1 Cor. 15:51-53; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Phil. 3:20, 21.
- g. The Throne of David. Luke 1:32; Isa. 9:6, 7; Acts 2:29, 30.
- h. The Millennial Reign. 1 Cor. 15:25; Isa. 32:1; 11:4, 5; Psa. 72:8; Rev. 20:4, 6.
- i. The Rapture preceding the Tribulation Period.
- j. The Cessation of Charismatic Sign Gifts. 1 Cor. 12:8-10.

XVIII. Of Marriage

We believe the Bible teaches that marriage is the union of one man and one woman (Genesis 1:27 & 28; Genesis 2:23-24; Malachi 2:14; Proverbs 18:22; Proverbs 19:14). We believe that marriage has only one meaning and that it is sanctioned by God as delineated in Scripture. We believe that God commands sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe that any form of sexual immorality such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography or any attempt to change one's biological sex, or disagree with one's biological sex, is sinful and offensive to God.

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by the church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, should abide by and agree to this Statement on Marriage and Sexuality and conduct themselves accordingly.

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Because God offers redemption and restoration to all, we believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of the Church.

Article V. Membership

Section 1. Status of Membership

All whose names appear upon the rolls of this church are members, but only those upon the "Active" list are considered in good and regular standing. Those whose names appear upon the "Inactive" list have no right of franchise and may not be granted a letter of "good and regular standing." Members who have not reached their eighteenth birthday shall not have right of franchise.

Section 2. Reception of Members

Anyone professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior, giving evidence of change of heart, having been baptized by immersion, and declaring himself in accord with the principles, practices, and doctrines of this church may become a candidate for church membership.

A. A person may become a candidate for church membership in any one of the following ways:

1. By Baptism on confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, giving evidence of a change of heart and life.

2. By letter of recommendation from any church of like faith and order upon acceptance of the statement of faith of this church. Letters issued by other than Bible-believing Baptist Churches shall not be considered valid evidence of salvation or baptism and may not be used as grounds for the candidate uniting with this church.

3. By testimony of Christian experience, if the candidate has previously been baptized by immersion as a believer and accepts the statement of faith of this church.

4. By reinstatement, on confession and restoration of such as may have been suspended from fellowship by an act of discipline of the church.

B. Candidates for membership by any of the above ways shall be interviewed by the Board of Deacons which may make a recommendation to the church.

C. Candidates shall be received into the membership of this church by a vote of the members present and voting at any regular service of the church.

D. Newly received members shall be extended the right hand of fellowship by the Pastor or his appointee at the earliest convenient occasion.

Section 3. Privileges of Members and Duties

A. Voting: Every active member eighteen years of age or older, who is not under disciplinary action of the church, shall have the privilege of voting on any item of business brought before the church.

B. In the event that a member wishes to bring an issue or concern before the church body, that issue or concern must first be brought to the Pastor and Deacons in sufficient time for it to be added to the agenda for the next business meeting, consistent with the requirements for notification of the church prior to business meeting.

C. It is expected of members that they shall respect the Pastor and officers of the church and cooperate with them to the best of their ability in every project for the advancement of the work. They are expected to abide by the Constitution of the church and to agree without mental reservation with its doctrines as presented and defined in the Statement of Faith. They are, likewise, expected to live exemplary Christian lives, to abstain from all appearance of evil in speech and conduct, to live a life separate from worldly practices, to support the work of the Lord in this church by giving of their tithes and offerings, and to faithfully attend the services.

Section 4. Discipline of Members

A. In case of the exercise of Church discipline, the directions of the Word of God are sufficient, and are to be observed. Matt. 18:15-17.

B. The exercise of discipline shall be the responsibility of the Board of Deacons, and in cases where dismissal of a member or members is deemed advisable, such action shall be presented to the church. Every effort shall be made to restore such members before disciplinary action is taken.

C. Where charges are made against a member, the accused shall be notified of the nature of the charges, either personally or by letter, and shall be summoned to appear before the Board of Deacons to make answer to the charges. At least two weeks notice of such meeting shall be given the party involved. If the accused does not appear in response to the summons, unless satisfactory reason is given for such non-appearance, the Board of Deacons shall recommend to the Church the exclusion of such a member. If the accused

appears before the Board, there shall be a full and fair hearing of the case, and the Board of Deacons is empowered to acquit the accused, if a majority of those present vote that the accused is innocent of the charges. If, on the other hand, the majority of the Deacons present vote that the accused is guilty of the charges preferred, they shall recommend to the Church that the accused be excluded from the membership of the Church. The Church must either approve the recommendation or hear the case for itself.

D. Anyone against whom charges have been made and in whose case the Board of Deacons has recommended exclusion, may appeal to the Church for a hearing of the case before the Church. The Church shall then decide whether to hear such case or whether it will act, without such hearing, upon recommendation of the Board of Deacons.

Section 5. Dismissal of members

A. Any member in good standing shall be entitled at any time to a letter of recommendation in the usual form, with which to unite with another Bible-believing Baptist church. Letter of recommendation shall be sent to the Church with which the member desires to unite.

B. Letters cannot be given to persons for the purpose of uniting with churches other than Bible believing Baptist Churches, but any active member is entitled at any time to receive a certificate of standing and Christian character.

Section 6. Suspension of Members

A. Members who violate the Church Covenant by failing to attend the regular services of the Church for a period of six months or in the case of non-resident members who fail either by letter or financial support to indicate their continued interest, and who have no legitimate excuse, such to be determined by the Pastor and the Board of Deacons, shall be transferred to the inactive membership of the Church by the Deacons. The members transferred to inactive membership shall be notified by letter at the time of transfer.

B. Every effort shall be made by the Deacons to restore such members to active membership for a period of six months, and they may be restored by the decision of the Board of Deacons.

C. Names continuing on the inactive list for a period of six months shall be automatically dropped from the roll. The names of those dropped shall be read to the church by the Chairman of the Board of Deacons. Members removed from the roll shall be notified by letter at the time of removal.

Article VI. Organization

Section 1. Officers and Elected Personnel

In addition to the Pastor, the officers and personnel of this church shall be deacons, trustees, a clerk, an assistant clerk, a treasurer, an assistant treasurer, a financial secretary, a Bible School superintendent, an assistant Bible School superintendent, chief usher, assistant chief usher, nursery superintendent, and assistant nursery superintendent. They shall be elected annually with the exception of the financial secretary, who is appointed by the Board of Deacons, and no one person shall hold the same office for more than three consecutive years with the exception of the financial secretary. The term of office shall run from Annual Meeting to Annual Meeting.

Section 2. Standing Committees

There shall be the following standing committees: Auditing Committee, Sports Committee, and Sunshine Committee.

Section 3. Pastor

A. Qualifications

1. The Pastor shall meet the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.
2. The Pastor shall give wholehearted assent to the Constitution and Articles of Faith set forth in this document.

B. Election:

1. The election of the Pastor shall take place only in a meeting called for that purpose by public announcement, which announcement shall be made from the pulpit two preceding Sundays before the election takes place. The vote shall be by ballot and three-fourths of the votes cast shall be required for election. The Church shall consider only one candidate at a time.
2. His relationship shall continue until dissolved by request of himself or of the Church, in which case either shall have the right to claim sixty (60) days from the time such request is formally made before the relationship between them shall cease. The Church may declare the pulpit vacant by three-fourths of the votes cast at a regular called meeting.
3. In case the Pastor is being dismissed for practice which brings reproach upon the Name of the Savior or the office of the pastorate, he may be dismissed immediately and without notice being given provided he is proven guilty, as charged, by the Church.

C. Duties and Privileges

1. The Pastor is recognized as the shepherd of Christ's local church (1 Peter 5:1-5) and its chief officer, and, therefore is answerable primarily to Him. He shall preach the Word of God, administer the ordinances of the New Testament, shepherd and lead the Church in the fulfillment of its sacred task. He shall perform all other duties incumbent upon his office as the Lord may lead him.
2. The Pastor shall be Moderator of the Church and shall conduct all business meetings. In the event that the Pastor is not able to serve as moderator for a meeting, he shall designate a substitute to act temporarily in his place. The Pastor shall also be a member ex-officio of all boards and committees and counselor of all departments. No meetings of these boards or committees shall be legal unless the Pastor has first been notified of such.
3. The Pastor with the Deacons shall have the right to select speakers, such as evangelists, missionaries, and Bible teachers at such times and for such periods as may seem proper.
4. The Pastor, along with the Deacons, shall have the right to make decisions as to programs and procedures without vote of the church, but ultimately subject to the will of the church. They may also make minor decisions involving expenditures up to one thousand dollars (\$1000) without bringing the matter before the whole church, such as honorarium and normal operating of the church program. Pastor and deacons are also authorized to spend up to \$3,000 on an emergency basis without a mandatory church vote announced in advance, but with the proviso that the board of deacons notify the whole church at the earliest date regarding what the expenditure entailed.

Section 4. Board of Deacons

This board shall consist of up to seven members who shall meet the qualifications of Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Promptly after the annual meeting, this board shall organize by electing a chairman, a vice-chairman, and a clerk, and appointing committees deemed necessary by them for their assistance. They may call an advisory council for advice and recommendation whenever it seems wise and beneficial. The clerk shall report to the church clerk the items of business which should appear on the church records and give a general report at the annual meeting.

It shall be the duty of the deacons to cooperate with the Pastor in the spiritual oversight of the church. They shall be charged especially with:

1. The spiritual advancement of the church and watch care of members.
2. The preparation and serving of the communion.
3. Assistance with the ordinance of baptism.
4. Examination and recommendation of the candidates for church membership.
5. The care, custody, and oversight of the church property.
6. The raising of funds to meet current expenses of the church.
7. Distribute aid to the needy as deemed necessary.
8. Engage church personnel, such as custodian, organist, choir director, song leader, youth workers, and secretary.
9. Recommend policy and procedure to the church for approval, including an annual budget.
10. All publicity shall be the responsibility of the Board of Deacons and the Pastor.

Subject to the will of the church, this Board shall determine the character and fix the hours for all services. This Board shall be responsible for the pulpit supply in the absence of the Pastor, and shall serve as the pulpit committee when the pulpit is vacant. The terms of the Deacons shall be for three years, arranged to expire alternately. After serving one term, each man must be considered ineligible for re-election for a period of one year. Any vacancies occurring on the Board may be filled by the Board from the membership of the church until the annual meeting, when one will be elected to fill the unexpired term of office. The Board shall meet periodically at a time determined by its members. Special meetings may be called by the chairman of the Board or the Pastor.

Section 5. Board of Trustees

The Church shall elect from the Board of Deacons three members to assume legal responsibilities. The term will be for three years, arranged to expire alternately. At the expiration of a full term, members of this Board shall not be eligible to serve as a trustee for one year.

Section 6. Bible School Superintendents

The superintendent and the assistant superintendent of the Bible School are responsible to, and under the jurisdiction of, the Church through the Board of Deacons. The superintendent is the executive head of the Bible School, responsible for the organization and operation of the school and the correlation of its program into the total church program. He shall make all staff appointments, subject to approval by the Pastor, except for officers elected on an annual basis at which time he shall serve, as ex-officio member of an appointed nominating committee. He shall supervise the work of the entire school, directing the activities of other general officers, department superintendents, and committees which

are appointed to carry out a specific assignment. He shall preside over all staff meetings and workers conferences. All staff members under his jurisdiction must be in full accord with the doctrinal statement of the Church and shall endeavor to live in separation from the world, avoiding all appearances of evil and setting an example in dress, speech, and deportment. The assistant superintendent shall work with the general superintendent in carrying out the program, act in the absence of the superintendent and fill out, any unexpired term in the event of a vacancy.

Section 7. Clerk and Assistant Clerk

The clerk shall keep accurate records of all church business, which shall be approved at the next church business meeting and shall preserve in a safe place all church documents; shall keep a correct register of the membership with the date and manner of their admission and dismissal. He shall inform all heads of committees from whom annual reports are expected, at least three weeks prior to the annual meeting. At the annual meeting of the Church, he shall submit a statistical report of the membership for the past year, and a general record of the Church. The assistant clerk shall act in the absence of the clerk and shall assist the clerk in any way, and fill out any unexpired term in the event of a vacancy.

Section 8. Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer

The treasurer shall hold all monies of the church. He shall pay all bills approved within the church budget as funds are made available for the purpose. He shall keep a record of all receipts and disbursements with proper vouchers. He shall make reports whenever requested by the Church to do so, and in full at the annual meeting. The assistant treasurer shall act in the absence of the treasurer and shall assist the treasurer in any way, and fill out any unexpired term in the event of a vacancy.

Section 9. Financial Secretary

The financial secretary shall receive all monies and offerings for current expense, count, record, and deposit them in the Church bank account. He shall give the Church treasurer a record of monies received weekly and keep a record of the same. He shall distribute receipts every three months to those who use numbered envelopes provided by the Church. He shall make reports whenever requested to do so by the Church and in full at the annual meetings. He shall be appointed annually by the Board of Deacons and shall be authorized to select assistants subject to the approval of the Board of Deacons.

Section 10. Sunshine Committee

This committee shall consist of two members elected by the Church. It shall be the duty of one member to provide flowers for public services and one member shall be responsible for tokens of remembrance during illness, accident, or bereavement. Purchases shall be regulated by discretion and the financial condition of the Church.

Section 11. Auditing Committee

The auditing committee shall consist of two members of the Church who shall be elected at the annual meeting. They shall audit the records of the Church treasurer and financial secretary, and such other funds as may from time to time be provided. This committee shall report its findings to the church at its annual meeting.

Section 12. Nursery Superintendent and Assistant

The nursery superintendent shall direct all affairs concerning the operating of the nursery, subject to the approval of the Board of Deacons.

Section 13. Sports Committee

The sports committee, consisting of two members, shall be responsible for the direction of the athletic program of the Church subject to the rules and regulations laid down by the Board of Deacons.

Section 14. Nominating Committee

In October, the Deacons shall appoint a nominating committee consisting of five members, two of whom shall be Deacons and three from the Church at large. The following offices are to be filled by Church vote annually: Deacons, clerk, assistant clerk, treasurer, assistant treasurer, Bible school superintendent, assistant Bible school superintendent, chief usher, assistant chief usher, auditing committee, nursery superintendent, assistant nursery superintendent, sports committee, and sunshine committee. The nominating committee shall secure one or more candidates for each office to be filled at the annual election and prepare a ballot for this election. Because no nominations will be received from the floor, the nominating committee will receive suggested names for nominees to office from the membership until December 1st. The ballot will be posted not later than the Sunday before the annual meeting.

Section 15. Vacancies

In case a vacancy should occur in any office, a successor shall be elected to serve out the unexpired term of office at any regular business meeting of the Church. The only exception to this method of filling vacancies occurs with reference to the Board of Deacons which may appoint one to fill a vacancy until annual elections.

Article VII. Meetings

Section 1. The Lord's Day

The church shall meet regularly on each Lord's Day for public worship. The Lord's Supper shall be observed monthly.

Section 2. The Mid-Week Services

Each Wednesday night the Church shall meet for prayer, Bible study, and Christian fellowship unless otherwise specified.

Section 3. The Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting for election of officers, presentation of the budget, reports and other necessary business shall be held on the second Friday of January. All officers and departments presenting reports shall be notified by the Church clerk three (3) weeks in advance of the meeting.

Section 4. Quarterly Business Meeting

A quarterly business meeting may be held on the second Wednesday of April, July, and October to conduct business if required.

Section 5. Business Meetings

Business meetings may be called by the Pastor, by the Board of Deacons, or by any ten members of the Church who are in good and regular standing and are eighteen years of age and over, upon the giving of notice. This notice, stating time and place of meeting and

business to be transacted, shall be read from the pulpit at regularly scheduled services on two Sundays previous to the business meetings. Business normal to the function of the Church may be conducted at any regular meeting, preferably the mid-week service. Advance notice shall be given when possible prior to conducting business, and shall be required when decision necessitates information sometime before voting. The pastor, or his designee (see Article 6, Section 3.C.2), shall be the moderator of all business meetings. The moderator shall determine the rules of procedure according to his sense of fairness and common sense, giving all members the opportunity to be heard. The moderator is the final authority on questions of procedure, and his decision is final and controlling. If the church is without a pastor, the Chairman of the Deacons shall serve as moderator.

Section 6. Quorums

In all business meetings, twenty percent (20%) of the membership in good and regular standing, eighteen years of age and over, shall constitute a quorum.

Article VIII. Policy

Section 1. Fiscal Year of the Church

The fiscal year shall begin on the first day of January. All organizations within the church, being a part of the church life, shall keep correct records and whenever so directed shall present reports to the Church. The books of the officers of the Church and those of its organizations shall be open at all times to members, subject to permission of the Board of Deacons, records of personal gifts are excepted.

Section 2. Regarding the Will of the Church

The will of the church on any given matter, duly expressed by its vote, shall be carried out by all committees, officers and organizations of the Church.

Section 3. Financing

All monies shall be raised in a Scriptural manner (voluntary offerings). Monies or funds for the purpose of making alterations, improvements, or for the purpose of constructing a new building or buildings may be raised by borrowing of monies, the issuance of bonds and/or other evidences of indebtedness.

Section 4. Elections

Members in good and regular standing, eighteen years of age and over, shall be qualified voters. All officers shall be elected by ballot, unless otherwise provided by consent of assembly. All questions shall be decided by a majority vote of the qualified voters voting thereon, except in calling a Pastor the vote shall be not less than a three-fourths majority.

Section 5. Missions

All missionaries and groups supported partially or wholly by this church shall be known to be in hearty agreement with our Confession of Faith, both in doctrine and in practice. The Church shall seek to have a missionary to speak occasionally and shall not neglect Home Missions but shall seek to aid new churches of like faith and practice as the Lord shall direct and enable. Missionary finances shall be decided by the whole Church. Designated funds will be received and distributed only to those individuals or groups who are in compliance with this policy.

Section 6. Amendments

The constitution may be changed at any business meeting of the Church by three-fourths vote of all qualified voters present. Meetings for constitutional changes shall meet the requirements set forth in Article VII, Section 5. Proposed changes will be posted two weeks in advance of the meeting.

Section 7. Guide

In all matters not governed by these articles of association, the Church shall be governed, as to polity, by the moderator and the laws of the State of New York.

Section 8. Missionary Retirement Policy

Upon retirement from active ministry, supported missionaries shall continue to receive monthly support for 1 year (12 months) after their official retirement date. They will receive 100% of their monthly support amount for the first 6 months, and 50% of their monthly support amount for the last 6 months. At the end of the year (12 months after official retirement date), they will no longer receive monthly support. Missionaries that had retired prior to the adoption of this policy are not subject to this policy. (At end of year 2015, fully supported retired missionaries, not subject to this retirement policy, are Jean Beckley and Rillie Mae Kennedy).

Section 9. Missionary Emeritus Policy

It shall be the policy of this church to maintain a line item in the annual missions budget designated 'Missionary Emeritus'. 'Missionary Emeritus' is designated for those missionaries who were previously supported by Bethel Baptist Church, and are no longer supported as per the missionary retirement policy. The purpose of this fund is to provide financial support on an as needed basis at the discretion of the deacon board, to be accomplished by means of an annual budget amount, approved spending limit of the board, or through action of the church. Additionally, individual gifts can be designated to missionaries in the emeritus category, but are subject to all related policies and procedures for such gifts.

Section 10. Facilities Policy

The facilities and grounds of Bethel Baptist Church (found at 300 N. Jensen Road, Vestal, NY) are for the sole use and benefit of its members, guests and visitors for church related functions. All people are welcome during our weekly services on Sunday and Wednesday. Office visits during the week are at the discretion of the Pastor. Special events open to the public will be announced via the church sign (along Jensen Road) or use of special marketing materials. Non-church related functions and use of the facility and grounds are restricted to members of Bethel Baptist Church. The facilities and grounds shall not be used for rental or hire purposes. The sole exception is the parking arrangement between Bethel Baptist Church and the Matco Group (JFM Real Estate, 320 N. Jensen Road, Vestal, NY). This agreement is to be reviewed and approved by the deacon board every two years.

Section 11. Designated Funds Policy

It is the policy of Bethel Baptist Church that the deacon board has exclusive control of and discretion to use all designated contributions. Every attempt will be made to honor contribution designations; however, the board is not bound to honor such contribution designations and donors will not be able to recover contributions if the board fails to honor the donor's designation. For tax purposes, all donations made to existing staff or supported

missionaries will be included in their reported salary and contributions. Designated gifts made to non-supported missionaries will not be accepted by the church. Donations can be made to specified funds; however, contributions made to unrecognized project funds are to be used at the discretion of the board.

Section 12. Child Protection Policy

General Purpose Statement

Bethel Baptist Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of Bethel Baptist Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and workers from false accusations.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “worker” includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children, including anyone involved in overnight activities involving minors, in counseling of minors, or in one-on-one mentoring of minors.

Selection of Workers

All workers will be members of Bethel Baptist Church. All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a) Six Month Rule

No person will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until he or she has been involved with Bethel Baptist Church for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b) Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by Bethel Baptist Church. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at Bethel Baptist Church.

c) Personal Interview

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his or her suitability for the position.

d) Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicant's references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at Bethel Baptist Church.

e) Criminal Background Check

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and “workers” as defined above.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing Bethel Baptist Church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, he or she will be unable to work with children.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the pastor of Bethel Baptist Church (assisted by two other selected adults) on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances.

Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at Bethel Baptist Church.

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our classes and activities.

Some youth classes or activities might have only one adult teacher in attendance and the class or activity might include as few as one student. Whenever this is the case, we will designate a second adult to roam the church to monitor the class or activity.

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological, or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at Bethel Baptist Church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his or

her care, this should be reported immediately to the Pastor of Bethel Baptist Church for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by New York State law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Bethel Baptist Church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker or church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.
3. All allegations of abuse will be reported to the civil authorities, and the organization will comply with New York State's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The organization will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. The insurance company will be notified, and the organization will complete an incident report. Any documents receiving related to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. The organization will designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of the organization will be advised to refrain from speaking to the media.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purposes of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters who are themselves under age eighteen (18) to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 14
- Must be screened as specified above.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

Check-in/Check-out Procedure

For children below third grade, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian, who will receive a "child check" for the child (similar to a claim check). The parent or guardian must present the "child check" in order to sign out the child from our care. In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to present the "child check", the Nursery Director, the Sunday School Superintendent, the Assistant Sunday School Superintendent, or the Pastor, will be responsible for releasing the

child to the care of a parent or guardian after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent or guardian.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for every child at Bethel Baptist Church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should not be dropped off:

- Fever within the last 48 hours
- Communicable or infectious disease

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of Bethel Baptist Church not to administer disciplinary action to children, but rather to contact the parent or guardian.

Restroom Guidelines

Children Five Years Old and Younger

Children five years old and younger should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers will escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They will always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone.

When there is only one worker and one child, then the worker will either contact the parent/guardian or contact another adult to assist. This will be done in person or utilizing technology (cell phone, buzzer, etc).

The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers will prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

Children Six Years Old and Older

For children six years old and older, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (bandages, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parents or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

Training

Bethel Baptist Church will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will provide an annual review of this policy with all current workers. All workers will sign-off after the annual review and this record will be kept on file at Bethel Baptist Church.

Article IX. Miscellaneous

Section 1.

This revised constitution shall take effect and be enforced on and after October 21, 1983 (date of adoption by vote of the congregation).

Section 2.

Upon adoption of this revised constitution, any and all previous constitutions are hereby repealed.

Amendment adopted January 8, 1999

We believe the bible teaches that marriage is the union of one man and one woman (Gen. 2:20-24; Matt. 19:4-6; Eph. 5:31; Heb. 13:4) for life by God and is dissolved only by death (Rom. 7:1-3; Mal. 2:16).

Amendments adopted January 8, 2016

The following revisions to take effect and are to be enforced on and after January 8, 2016 (date of adoption by vote of the congregation). Any and all previous constitutions are hereby repealed.

1. Addition of XVIII, Of Marriage, to Article IV, Articles of Faith.
 - a. Removal of statement regarding dissolution of marriage by death.
2. Section 2, Article IX, Miscellaneous has been superseded by the addition of XVIII, Of Marriage, Article IV, Articles of Faith.
3. Removal of reference to GARBC approval in Section 5, Missions, Article VIII, Policy.
4. Addition of Section 8, Missionary Retirement Policy to Article VIII, Policy.
5. Addition of Section 9, Missionary Emeritus Fund to Article VIII, Policy.
6. Addition of Section 10, Facilities Policy to Article VIII, Policy.
7. Addition of Section 11, Designated Funds Policy to Article VIII, Policy.

Amendments adopted April 11, 2018

1. Article VI, Section 3. Pastor, C. Duties and Privileges, paragraph 4. Sentence added: “Pastor and deacons are also authorized to spend up to \$3,000 on an emergency basis without a mandatory church vote announced in advance, but with the proviso that the board of deacons notify the whole church at the earliest date regarding what the expenditure entailed.”
2. Article VI, Section 7. Clerk and Assistant Clerk. Sentence changed from “before adjournment of meetings” to “at the next church business meeting”.

Amendment adopted May 22, 2019

1. Addition of Section 12, Child Safety Policy (5/22/19) to Article VIII, Policy.

Amendments adopted May 19, 2021

1. Addition to Article II. Purpose: “Bethel Baptist Church is a New York Corporation and operates under the laws of the State of New York.
2. Addition to Article V. Membership, Section 3, paragraph B: “In the event that a member wishes to bring an issue or concern before the church body, that issue or concern must first be brought to the Pastor and Deacons in sufficient time for it to be added to the agenda for the next business meeting, consistent with the requirements for notification of the church prior to business meeting.”
3. Modification of wording in phrases in Article V. Membership, Section 3, paragraph C: (1) from “It will be expected” to “It is expected...”; (2) from “They will be expected” to “They are expected”; (3) from “They will, likewise, be expected” to “They are, likewise, expected”.
4. Striking of phrase “and By-laws” in Article V. Membership, Section 3, paragraph C. The church does not have “By-laws” outside this Constitution.
5. Capitalization of “School” in Article VI. Organization, Section 1 for consistency with the rest of the Constitution.
6. Addition to Article VI. Organization, Section 3. Pastor, Paragraph C.2.: “shall conduct all business meetings. In the event that the Pastor is not able to serve as moderator for a meeting, he shall designate a substitute to act temporarily in his place. The Pastor shall also be”
7. Modification to Article VI. Organization, Section 3. Pastor, Paragraph C.4.: from “make decisions as to programs and procedures of a spiritual significance” to “make decisions as to programs and procedures without vote of the church, but ultimately subject to the will of the church.”
8. Addition to Article VII. Meetings, Section 5. Business meetings: “The pastor, or his designee (see Article 6, Section 3.C.2), shall be the moderator of all business meetings. The moderator shall determine the rules of procedure according to his sense of fairness and common sense, giving all members the opportunity to be heard. The moderator is the final authority on questions of procedure, and his decision is final and controlling. If the church is without a pastor, the Chairman of the Deacons shall serve as moderator.”

9. Change of Article VIII. Policy, Section 7. Guide from “governed, as to polity, by the NEW DIRECTORY FOR BAPTIST CHURCHES by E.T. Hiscox, and by the laws of the State of New York. In all matters relating to parliamentary practice, the church shall be governed by ROBERT’S RULES OF ORDER and GREGG’S PARLIAMENTARY LAW.” to “governed, as to polity, by the moderator and laws of the Sate of New York.”