

GRAND PRAIRIE BAPTIST CHURCH CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

THE CHURCH 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 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 devotions, to religiously educate our children, to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to uphold the following Biblical principles in our lives through our thoughts and actions: [Galatians 6: 1-10](#); [Ephesians 4: 23 – 6:18](#); [I John 1:5-10](#); [I John 2: 3-8](#); [I Corinthians 6:19-20](#) 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 I
NAME, AFFILIATION, AND DOCTRINE

- Section 1** The name of this church shall be Grand Prairie Baptist Church, Inc.
- Section 2** This church shall be affiliated with the Marion Baptist Association/Ohio; [American Baptist Churches/Ohio](#); and the [American Baptist Churches/USA](#).
- Section 3** This church holds and advocates the doctrines characteristic of the churches known as the Baptist persuasion; namely,
- A. **Belief** that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, the final authority in all matters pertaining to a knowledge of God and His will for mankind. ([Psalm 119: 111](#), [II Peter 1:21](#), [II Timothy 3: 16-17](#)).
 - B. **Belief** in the Trinity, recognizing there are three Persons in one essence; God the Father; God the Son; and God the Holy Spirit – Three in One and One in Three. ([Genesis 1](#); [Numbers 6:24-26](#); [Matthew 28:9](#)).
 - C. **Belief** in the “Doctrines of Grace” wherein it is declared: All men need salvation from sin unto righteousness; this cannot be provided by themselves. God through His holy and loving purpose has made salvation unto righteousness possible through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, His Son. And that this salvation unto righteousness is made effective in human life by being accepted in active trustful faith by the repentant, surrendering believer, who thus and then experiences the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, thus becoming a child of God, possessor of Eternal Life, a new member of the Church of Jesus Christ, and the citizen of the kingdom of God. ([Romans 5: 19-21](#); [I Corinthians 1:30](#); [John 1:12](#); [John 5:24](#)).
 - D. **Belief** in the “priesthood of all believers,” meaning that all believers are spiritually equal in God’s sight, both as to privilege and responsibility, but recognizing that spiritual gifts vary. ([I Peter 2:5, 9](#); [Ephesians 4: 15-16](#)).
 - E. **Belief** that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, now and eternally. ([Ephesians 5:23](#)).
 - F. **Belief** that the church should insist that its membership be confined to those who have made an individual commitment of their life to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and have given evidence of following Him. ([Acts 2:41](#); [Acts 8:12](#)).
 - G. **Belief** that the church is properly governed only when the policy of the church, under God, is congregational and democratic, which is in keeping with New Testament teaching. ([Acts 13: 1-2](#); [Acts 15: 2-35](#)).
 - H. **Belief** that the ordinance of believer’s baptism by immersion, is the will of Christ for His church and symbolizes being buried with Christ in death, and risen to newness of life. And baptism by immersion is the mode which scripture calls the believer to do in following Jesus’ example. Thus, baptism is an outward act indicating an inward spiritual change. ([Romans 6:4](#)).
 - I. **Belief** that the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper was instituted by the Lord to the church, in remembrance of Him; the elements of bread and wine symbolizing the body and blood of Christ. ([I Corinthians 11:26](#)).
 - J. **Belief** in the Second Coming of Christ which will bring to final fulfillment, God’s eternal purposes. The final judgment, which will separate the wicked unto eternal punishment and the righteous unto eternal life with Christ. ([I Thessalonians 4:16-18](#); [Acts 1:2](#); [Matthew 13:41- 42, 49, 50](#)).

ARTICLE II
MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 Anyone professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ giving evidence of a change of heart and adopting the views of faith and practice held by this church, together with its covenant and constitution, may upon approval of the church and evidence of Believer's Baptism and having been baptized by immersion, be received into full fellowship.

Section 2 There are three classes of candidates for membership:

- A. **By Baptism:** A person accepting the conditions of membership, as set forth in Section 1 of this article and by vote of the church, be accepted as a candidate for membership and after being baptized, be received into full fellowship.
- B. **By Letter:** A person presenting a letter of recommendation or dismissal from some other Christian church, and who has been baptized by immersion, shall by vote of the church and having received the right hand of fellowship, be received into full fellowship.
- C. **By Experience:** A person presenting a statement of faith and having accepted the conditions of membership, and having been baptized by immersion, may by vote of the church, be received into full fellowship.

Section 3 Membership status: An audit of the church membership roll shall be made by the Diaconate Board every year. The results will be reported at the January quarterly business meeting concerning active and inactive memberships. Members living out-of-reach of the church will be expected to keep the church notified of any change of address.

- A. **Active Membership:** An active roll shall be kept to consist of names of members who maintain active relation with the church by attending four or more worship services a year and, or financial support, unless hindered by circumstances beyond personal control.
- B. **Inactive Membership:** A member who has attended less than four worship services in the past year and without manifesting an interest therein by communication with the church or contributing to its support, shall be placed on an inactive list by instruction of the Diaconate Board, and he or she shall be so notified by letter to ascertain whether they wish to continue their names on the church membership roll. Inactive members are not to be included in the church membership total and have no voting rights. When an inactive member becomes reactivated, the Diaconate Board may restore his or her name to the active roll without the vote of the church. Upon request for a letter from another church, transfer indicating active membership may be granted.

Section 4 Removal from the church membership roll may be as follows:

- A. **By Death:**
- B. **By Letter:** Any member in good standing shall, by his/her own request, be entitled to a letter of dismissal, or to unite with another Christian church, and when so united, shall be dismissed from this church. Letters of dismissal shall be sent directly to the clerk or pastor of the church with which the dismissed member wishes to unite. If that member so desires, he/she may secure a duplicate.
- C. **By Request:** Any person desiring to remove his/her name from the church membership roll may do so by submitting a request to the Diaconate Board, who will discuss with the individual the reasons for the request and report at the following quarterly business meeting.
- D. **By Exclusion:** Should a member become an offense to the church, and to its good name by reason of unchristian conduct, and by persistent breach of the church covenant, the church may, upon the recommendation of the Diaconate Board, terminate his/her membership. The member will have the opportunity to present himself/herself before the Diaconate Board.

Section 5 Church officers must be members of Grand Prairie Baptist Church.

ARTICLE III
CHURCH OFFICERS AND DUTIES

The Church Officers:

Moderator: Diaconate Chairperson
Vice Moderator: Trustee Chairperson
Church Clerk:

Worship Board:

Nine Diaconate Board Members
Music Chairperson

Finance Board:

Four Trustees
Church Treasurer
Financial Secretary
Mission Secretary-Treasurer

Christian Education Board:

Sunday School Superintendent
Pre-School Children's Department
Children's Department
Youth Department
Adult Department
Leadership Development Department

Fellowship Board:

Family Life Chairpersons
Flower Chairperson
Caring Chairperson

Mission Board:

Mission Secretary-Treasurer
President of [American Baptist Women's Ministries](#)
Two members at-large – elected office



Section 1 Pastor:

A. The Pastor shall be a firm believer in, and a preacher of the gospel. This person shall uphold the basic doctrines of faith as held by the membership of this church. This person shall be an ordained American Baptist minister. This person shall lead the local church in cooperative fellowship with the [American Baptist Churches/USA](#). This person shall be an ex-officio member of all boards and committees of the church and its auxiliary organizations.

B. The pastor shall be called for an indefinite period at a regular meeting of the church, or at a special-called meeting. This person shall be declared accepted if he/she receives three-quarters of the vote cast by those qualified to vote.

C. The pastor shall receive the salary approved by the church, following a review between the pastor and the Finance Board, as to salary and service, being established prior to the annual meeting each year.

D. When the resignation of the pastor is submitted, it must be given, in writing, to the Church Clerk, and presented to the church by being read to a meeting of the church. A minimum of thirty-days notice shall be expected.

E. If, for any reason, there is dissatisfaction with the services of the pastor, the Diaconate Board will discuss the matter with him/her with a view to reconciling the difference. Should this fail, a special business meeting shall be called, at which time the pastor and congregation will thoroughly discuss all matters pertaining to his/her ministry in the church. Following the discussion, the pastor and family will absent themselves and a vote of confidence will be taken by ballot. If this vote fails to be seventy-five per cent in favor of the minister continuing, he/she will be so advised, and resignation will be required, effective no later than ninety days after date of the meeting. When possible, the area minister of the [American Baptist Churches of Ohio](#) shall be invited to be the Moderator of this meeting.

Section 2 Church Clerk:

The Church Clerk shall be elected for a two-year term by the church. He/she shall keep an accurate record of the business proceedings of the church; make a complete record of all members of the church; attend to the correspondence of the church.

Section 3 Worship Board:

A. Diaconate Board:

1. The Diaconate Board are to be chosen from among the faithful, spiritually mature, and experienced members. It shall be their duty to render all possible assistance to the pastor in his/her work. Four shall be elected annually for a two-year term in the even years. Five shall be elected annually for a two-year term in the odd years. Not more than four are to be designated as Deaconesses during one year. A Diaconate Board member shall not be eligible for re-election for a period of at least one year.

2. The Board shall choose annually, a chairperson and secretary/treasurer and shall meet each month. The Chairperson will serve as the Moderator.

3. They shall have the oversight of the spiritual interests of the church, and especially to examine into any misdemeanor, disorder, or difficulty existing between members. In all cases, they shall impartially and faithfully endeavor to reconcile brethren/sisters to each other in the Lord. It shall be their duty to recommend, such measures as they may consider necessary for the spiritual growth of the church.

4. They shall visit the sick, prepare and distribute the elements of the Lord's Supper, and assist the candidates for baptism. In consultation with the pastor, they shall interview candidates for membership.

5. They will be responsible for the appointment of ushers and the chairperson of said committee.

6. They shall be responsible for promoting special evangelistic services. They shall seek to encourage a growing commitment to Jesus Christ throughout the life of the church and carry out a program of visitation.

7. It shall be the Diaconate Board to visit with the congregation (members and non-members) to foster and encourage their attendance and participation in various services and ordinances of the church. It shall be their duty annually, to review the church membership roll, and to recommend such action as may be deemed necessary.

8. They shall appoint for approval at the October business meeting of the church, a nominating committee of not less than five members with two alternates, whose duty it shall be to nominate a slate of officers for the ensuing term. The nominating committee shall assume the responsibility of nominating candidates to fill any vacancies arising during the year.

9. When there is an absence of a pastor, they shall present a slate of ten candidates representing all voting ages as nearly as possible for the formulation of a Pulpit Committee. At this time, the congregation shall vote on the slate of candidates. The five receiving the most votes will serve as the Pulpit Committee. In case of a tie, a run-off vote will be taken. It shall be the responsibility of the Pulpit Committee to take such steps as may seem to them most appropriate to obtain a pastor who is selected based on [Section 1, A](#) above. When the Pulpit Committee has a name to present to the church, the Moderator or the Trustee Board Chairperson will call a special meeting of the church, for which [due notice](#) has been given. Three-quarters of the ballots cast shall be necessary for a choice to be made; if possible, unanimity should be secured.

10. This Board shall appoint a Pastoral Relations Committee. This should be a committee of two members who are sensitive, positive, understanding, and able to keep confidences. They shall serve three years with the option of either party requesting a change. The committee shall meet with the pastor quarterly. Special meetings may be called by the chairperson if needed. The pastor may request such a special meeting. The purpose of the committee shall be to foster constructive communications between the congregation and its pastoral leadership, and to counsel with the pastor regarding professional and personal well-being and relate any concerns or needs to the proper boards and the congregation.

B. Music Chairperson:

The Music Chairperson shall be elected for a two-year term. He/she shall organize and administrate the music ministry of the church. He/she shall be responsible for the selection of the choir director and other musicians as required.

Section 4 Finance Board:

A. Trustees:

1. The Trustee Board shall hold in trust the property of the church. Subject to the will of the membership, arrange to make such repairs and alterations as may be thought necessary. However, they shall undertake no expenditure exceeding five-hundred dollars (\$500) without first obtaining the approval of the membership. In an emergency situation, whenever immediate action is required, they have the power to make necessary repairs without the approval of the membership.

2. The Board shall choose annually a chairperson and secretary and shall meet each month. This person shall serve as vice-moderator in the absence of the moderator.

3. They shall have the authority to employ a church care person and church secretary. The care person's job description will be set by the Trustees. The secretary's job description will be set with the Trustees working in conjunction with the pastor.

4. They shall audit the church financial records prior to the annual church business meeting.

5. They shall, as the occasion arises, determine for what purpose the buildings may be used. In conjunction with the pastor and the Diaconate Board, they shall publish a list of guidelines regarding the use of the church building. It shall also be their duty to execute all deeds, mortgages, notes, and other papers of the church; to keep the church properties insured, and to purchase all necessary supplies; but they shall not sell or transfer any church property without a vote of the church. It shall be their duty to preserve all valuable papers of the church such as mortgages, deeds, notes, insurance policies, and other valuable papers. Two trustees shall be elected annually for a two-year term.

B. Treasurer:

The Treasurer shall be elected for a one-year term. It shall be his/her duty to pay all the approved bills of the church. He/she shall keep an accurate record of accounts and shall present a financial statement at each quarterly meeting of the church. He/she shall prepare a balance sheet of all monies received and disbursed during the year, and present it at the annual meeting of the church, after it has been audited. This person shall keep confidential information as such.

C. Financial Secretary:

The Financial Secretary shall be elected for a two-year term. He/she shall assist the Treasurer and keep records showing the amount given by each contributor through the envelope system, and shall give each contributor an annual statement. This person shall keep confidential information as such.

D. Mission Secretary-Treasurer:

The Mission Secretary-Treasurer shall be elected for a two-year term. It shall be his/her duty to receive and disburse all mission funds, as designated by the church budget. He/she shall keep an accurate record of accounts and shall present a financial statement at each quarterly business meeting of the church. He/she shall prepare a balance sheet of all monies received and disbursed during the year, and present it at the annual meeting of the church, after it has been audited. He/she shall maintain correspondence with our church's mission commitments and shall serve as a member of the Mission Board. This person shall keep confidential information as such.

Section 5 Christian Education Board:

1) Three members of the Christian Education Board shall be elected annually for a two-year term. This board shall be responsible for the organization, administration, and supervision of the entire educational program of the church, including work with pre-school children, children, youth, adult, and leadership development. They shall oversee the selection of teachers and curriculum used in all the educational programs of the church. All those serving in educational programs must be spiritually qualified for the position and it is preferred that they be members. In the event that a spiritually qualified member can not be found, a non-member may be used if he/she has been faithfully worshipping at GPBC for one year, is recommended by the SS Superintendent, and is confirmed by the Christian Education Board. It shall be the duty of this board to make arrangements for special observances such as: Mother's Day, Father's Day, Children's Day, Promotion Sunday, Christmas, and the Sunday School picnic.

2) This Board shall choose annually a chairperson and secretary and shall meet each month. This Board will be made up of these divisions:

- A. Sunday School Superintendent:
He/she shall have general supervision of the entire church school. He/she shall serve under the direction of the Christian Education Board. He/she shall have the option of appointing an assistant.
- B. Pre-School Children's Department:
This person shall oversee all the educational programs of the church involving pre-school children.
- C. Children's Department:
This person shall oversee all the educational programs of the church involving children.
- D. Youth Department:
This person shall oversee all the educational programs of the church involving youth.
- E. Adult Department:
This person shall oversee all the educational programs of the church involving adults.
- F. Leadership Development Department:
This person shall be responsible for planning and implementing training programs and events for all of those involved in the Christian Education programs of the church.

Section 6

Fellowship Board:

The Fellowship Board shall consist of the following persons:

- A. Family Life Committee:
One of the two Family Life persons shall be elected annually for a two-year term. One shall serve as the chairperson and one as the assistant. These individuals shall be responsible for organizing and promoting family-oriented programs and events to build up the body of Christ and the Christian home. They shall coordinate as much as possible their planning with all groups of the church to avoid conflicting events.
- B. Decorating Chairperson:
This person shall be elected for a two-year term. He/she shall be responsible for overseeing the decorating of the church building for special occasions. The chair shall be responsible for securing a Bible for members of our congregation who are being married. This person in addition to the above is required to keep accurate records of the expenditures. The chair shall prepare written reports for the quarterly and annual business meetings showing all funds were used.
- C. Caring Chairperson:
This person shall be elected for a two-year term. He/she shall be responsible for sending flowers, cards to sick, shut-ins and the bereaved of the church fellowship. To work with the pastor and deacons for caring and sharing ministry. Visitation and calls to new members, illness, bereavement, and absenteeism of the church fellowship. In addition, the chair is required to keep accurate records of expenditures and income of the flower fund. Responsible for the use of the amount in the fund. The chair shall prepare written reports for the quarterly and annual business meetings showing all funds were used.

Section 7 The Mission Board:

This board shall consist of the Mission's Secretary, the president of the [American Baptist Women's Ministries](#), two members elected alternately for two-year terms, and the pastor. They are responsible for promoting the various special denominational offerings. It also will help promote [mission awareness](#) among the members of the church. They shall have at their disposal a discretionary fund of up to \$500, when available, to make emergency commitments as deemed necessary without the consensus of the congregation at large.

ARTICLE IV
ORDINANCES OF THE LORD'S SUPPER AND BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

The Ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be observed at least once in each quarter, and on such special occasions as authorized by the Diaconate Board. The Ordinance of Believer's Baptism shall be observed as candidates become prepared.

ARTICLE V
BUSINESS MEETINGS

Section 1 Meetings:

- A. There shall be a quarterly business meeting on the first Wednesday following the first Sunday in April, July and October with the January meeting being held the first Wednesday following the second Sunday of January and being the annual church business meeting. Four weeks prior to the annual church business meeting, a business meeting will be held for the purpose of adopting the annual church budget and electing the church officers, both to be in effect as of January 1st of the ensuing year.
- B. All regular business meetings shall be announced two Sundays in advance. Special business meetings (other than emergency meetings) may be called by the pastor, Diaconate chairperson, Trustee chairperson, Christian Education or Mission Board. They shall give one week of advance notice of such meeting and state its purpose. 
[Robert's Rules of Order](#) shall be the rules of conduction. Each board shall be responsible for giving a full report during the business meetings.

Section 2 Quorum:

The following amendment to the church constitution became operating procedure for business meetings on April 9, 1997:

Amendment:

- A. Grand Prairie Baptist Church will not set a quorum for business meetings.
- B. Church board chairpersons attend all quarterly business meetings if at all possible.
- C. An agenda of what will be discussed or acted on at business meetings will be put in the church bulletin prior to said meeting.

Only members sixteen years of age and over shall have voting privileges of the church. All questions shall be decided by the majority of the votes of those present at any meeting of the church except in cases for which special provision is made.

Section 3 Elections:

Two Sundays prior to the December business meeting, the nominating committee shall post a slate of officers with one or more names for each office. Election of officers shall be by ballot. Further nominations may be made from the floor for any office at the election meeting. All candidates nominated shall have previously agreed to accept the office if elected.

Section 4 Amendments:

The foregoing Constitution shall not be suspended, altered, or amended, except by a three-fourths vote of the members present and qualified to vote at any business meeting of the church; providing, however, notice of such meeting, as well as notice of the proposed amendment has been given public announcement at least two Sundays prior.

PRAYER

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd for the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will; working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ to Whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

