
CONSTITUTION OF THE OLNEY BAPTIST CHURCH OF PHILADELPHIA, PA

As adopted by the membership on February 10, 2018 and amended.

PREAMBLE

Since it pleased Almighty God, by His Holy Spirit, to call certain of His servants to unite here in 1904 under the name The Olney Baptist Church of Philadelphia, for the worship of God and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and He has sustained and prospered this work to the present day; and

Whereas we, the members of The Olney Baptist Church of Philadelphia, having searched the Scriptures under the guidance of His Spirit, have recognized the need to reconstitute ourselves to more closely conform to His will for the Church in this age and prepare ourselves for greater efforts in His name;

Now therefore we, the members of The Olney Baptist Church of Philadelphia, do hereby organize ourselves and adopt this constitution as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of and bring glory to Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Bible, which is the only inerrant rule of faith and practice. This is articulated in the standards set forth in the New Hampshire Confession of Faith and the Covenant of this church, which this church adopts as its governing confessional documents. We also adopt The Baptist Faith and Message (2000) of the Southern Baptist Convention.

ARTICLE 1 – NAME AND NATURE

The name of this church is The Olney Baptist Church of Philadelphia. This church is a non-profit entity incorporated in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and recognized as a tax-exempt entity pursuant to Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code.

ARTICLE 2 – PURPOSE

- (1) This church exists by the grace of God, for the glory of God, which shall be the ultimate purpose in all its activities.
- (2) This church glorifies God by loving Him and obeying His commands through:
 - Worshipping the triune God;
 - Seeking Him in prayer;
 - Equipping the saints through Bible instruction and study;
 - Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching and personal evangelism, and any other means consistent with the teachings of the Bible;
 - Encouraging, supporting, and participating in missions work—local, domestic, and international;
 - Administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s supper;
 - Encouraging biblical fellowship among believers;
 - Serving other individuals, families, and churches by providing for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, in the name of Jesus Christ; and
 - Calling fellow churches to biblical faithfulness and purity through instruction and encouragement about the nature of the local church.

ARTICLE 3 – MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 1 – QUALIFICATIONS

To qualify for membership in this church, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration, who has been baptized by immersion in obedience to Christ, following his or her regeneration, and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. Each member must agree to submit to the teaching of the Bible as expressed in the Statement of Faith and must promise to keep the commitments expressed in the Church Covenant. The elders shall be responsible for determining each person’s qualification for membership. In making this determination, they may rely on a person’s profession of faith, or such other evidence, as the elders deem appropriate.

SECTION 2 – ADMISSION OF MEMBERS

- (1) The elders shall meet with applicants for church membership. Applicants shall:
 - (a) Profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and demonstrate a change of heart and Christian conduct;
 - (b) Credibly affirm or provide evidence that they have been baptized by immersion following their profession;
 - (c) Affirm in writing the views of faith and practices held by this church as set forth in the Church Covenant and its Statement of Faith;
- (2) Elders shall recommend qualified applicants for acceptance as members.
- (3) The church shall vote to receive an applicant as a member at any worship service or business meeting of the members. A three-fourths affirmative vote is required, and applicants shall at that point relinquish their membership in other churches.

SECTION 3 – DUTIES AND PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERSHIP

- (1) Each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God. Only members may serve in the ministries of the church; non-members may serve on an ad-hoc basis with the approval of the elders. Notwithstanding, non-members may serve the church for purposes of administration and professional consultation.
- (2) Under Christ, this congregation is governed by its members. Therefore, it is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend all business meetings and vote on the election of officers, on approval of annual budgets, on decisions regarding membership status, and on such other matters as may be submitted to a vote.

SECTION 4 – ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

- (1) Students and others temporarily residing in the Philadelphia area who are members of an evangelical church may apply for associate membership.

Qualifications are identical to those for full membership as set out above, except that home church membership must be retained. A letter of commendation will be sought from the applicant's home church.

- (2) Duties and privileges of associate members are the same as for other members except that:
- when absent from the Philadelphia area for extended periods of time they are released from the responsibility to attend our church services;
 - while they will be encouraged to participate in business meetings, they will not be eligible to stand for any office or to vote.
- (3) Termination of associate membership as a disciplinary measure will be as it is for other members, except that the elders shall also notify the pastor or elders of the home church of that termination. Associate membership will normally terminate immediately upon the ending of the period of temporary residence in the Philadelphia area.

SECTION 5 – ON CHURCH DISCIPLINE

- (1) Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15–17 and the example of the Bible. Church discipline, then, should ordinarily be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed.
- (2) Church discipline can include admonition by the elders or congregation, suspension from the Lord's supper for a definite period, deposition from office, and termination of membership (see Matthew 18:15–17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14–15; 1 Timothy 5:19–20; 1 Corinthians 5:4–5).¹

¹ The purpose of such discipline should be for the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined (see Proverbs 15:5; 29:15; 1 Corinthians 4:14; Ephesians 6:4; 1 Timothy 3:4–5; Hebrews 12:1–11; Psalm 119:115; 141:5; Proverbs 17:10; 25:12; 27:5; Ecclesiastes 7:5; Matthew 7:26–27; 18:15–17; Luke 17:3; Acts 2:40; 1 Corinthians 5:5; Galatians 6:1–5;

- (3) Since each member is privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God's leading, members are required to attend each Lord's-Day gathering whenever possible, and expected to participate in prayer and discipleship. Elders cannot shepherd members, and members cannot disciple each other, when they are absent from one another. A member who attends infrequently (excepting shut-in, academic, military, and similar mitigating circumstances) is a matter of spiritual concern for the elders and congregation. Members are encouraged to be involved in one another's lives and to encourage each other regularly. The elders may, at their discretion, admonish a member who attends infrequently, and if that member is still frequently absent, the elders may place that member on a spiritual watch-care list for the congregation to pray for, exhort, and encourage. If the member continues to be absent after spiritual watch-care, the elders shall conclude that their membership is no longer meaningful and recommend the congregation vote to terminate their membership.
- (4) Whenever a member is removed from membership for disciplinary reasons or terminated due to non-attendance, the elders shall write a letter to the terminated member to inform them that their membership has been terminated, and to encourage them to repent, reconcile, and renew their membership. The church clerk shall remove the member from the membership roll.

2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14–15; 1 Timothy 1:20; Titus 1:13–14; James 1:22); for the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them (see Proverbs 13:20; Romans 15:14; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 15:33; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:14 [note this is written to the whole church, not just to leaders]; 1 Timothy 5:20; Titus 1:11; Hebrews 10:24–25); for the purity of the church as a whole (see 1 Corinthians 5:6–7; 2 Corinthians 13:10; Ephesians 5:27; 2 John 10; Jude 24; Revelation 21:2); for the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians (see Proverbs 28:7; Matthew 5:13–16; John 13:35; Acts 5:1–14; Ephesians 5:11; 1 Timothy 3:7; 2 Peter 2:2; 1 John 3:10); and supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character (see Deuteronomy 5:11; 1 Kings 11:2; 2 Chronicles 19:2; Ezra 6:21; Nehemiah 9:2; Isaiah 52:11; Ezekiel 36:20; Matthew 5:16; John 15:8, 18:17, 25; Romans 2:24; 15:5–6; 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1; Ephesians 1:4; 5:27; 1 Peter 2:12).

SECTION 6 – TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

- (1) The church shall recognize the termination of a person's membership following his or her death, and may do so after he or she has voluntarily resigned or joined with another church. Membership may also be terminated as an act of church discipline (ordinarily, but not necessarily, at the recommendation of the elders) upon the vote of at least two thirds of the members present at any regular or special meeting of the members.
- (2) The church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church, either for the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline, or for any other biblical reason.

ARTICLE 4 – MEETINGS

SECTION 1 – WORSHIP MEETINGS

Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day, and may be held throughout the week as the church determines.

SECTION 2 – BUSINESS MEETINGS

- (1) In every meeting together, members shall act in that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- (2) The church shall hold three (3) regularly scheduled business meetings a year. One of these meetings shall be held in the spring and another in the fall. The third meeting shall be the annual business meeting and shall be held during winter after the new year. The exact times and dates shall be at the discretion of the elders and announced at two morning worship services prior to the meetings.
- (3) An elder designated by the elders shall preside as moderator at all business meetings of the church. The elders shall see that the stated meetings of the church are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members.

- (4) Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be thirty (30) percent of total members. Except when otherwise specified, all votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast by members present.
- (5) A budget shall be approved by the membership at the annual business meeting. Prior to this approval and subject to the elders' discretion, expenditures may continue in accordance with the budgeted amounts as stated in the prior year's budget.
- (6) At any regular or special business meeting, officers may be elected and positions filled as needed, so long as all relevant constitutional requirements have been met.
- (7) Special business meetings may be called as required by the elders, or at the written request, submitted to the elders, of five percent of the voting membership. The date, time, and purpose of any special meeting shall be announced at all public services of the church within two weeks preceding the meeting. In the event of a written request from the members, the elders shall call a special meeting to be held within one month of their receipt of the request.

ARTICLE 5 – OFFICERS

SECTION 1 – SUMMARY

The biblical offices in the church are elders and deacons. In addition, under this constitution our church recognizes the administrative positions of clerk and treasurer. All officers must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities. Except as otherwise specified, no officer described in this section shall serve in more than one office at a time.

SECTION 2 – ELDERS

- (1) The elders shall be composed of men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:6–9, ideally at least three.

- (2) Subject to the leading of God's Holy Spirit through the will of the congregation, the elders shall oversee the ministry and resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1–6 and 1 Peter 5:1–4, the elders shall devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine), and shepherding God's flock.
- (3) The church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling, by voting in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as elders. This recognition shall be reaffirmed by the church triennially. After an elder, other than the senior or associate pastor(s), has served two consecutive three-year terms, he may only be elected to the office of elder after at least one year. This provision may be over-ridden in order to maintain a minimum of three elders.
- (4) An elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that an elder should be dismissed should express such concern to the elders and, if need be, to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15–17 and 1 Timothy 5:17–21. Any of the elders may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote of the members at any business meeting of the church.
- (5) The elders shall take particular responsibility to examine and instruct prospective members, examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions, oversee the work of the deacons and appointed church agents and committees, conduct worship services, administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, equip the membership for the work of the ministry, encourage sound doctrine and practice, admonish and correct error, oversee the process of church discipline, coordinate and promote the ministries of the church, and mobilize the church for world missions. The elders are further to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share the church's fundamental convictions.
- (6) The elders may establish ministry positions or committees to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities. The elders may also propose funding for new

paid staff positions. The membership shall approve all candidates to fill the positions of senior and associate pastor. The scope and approval of job descriptions for any staff position shall reside in the hands of those with hiring authority for that position.

- (7) The elders shall have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff members. This responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to another staff member.
- (8) Each year the elders, after consultation with the deacons, and the membership, shall present to the church an itemized budget. This budget shall be made available to the congregation at least one month prior to the annual business meeting so as to provide an opportunity for feedback. No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the approval of the elders. The elders may approve non-budgeted expenses up to \$2,500, or delegate this approval to staff and committees as they deem appropriate; expenditures of \$2,500 or more shall require congregational approval.
- (9) The elders shall elect a chairman of elders' meetings and shall also elect one of their number to serve as moderator of business meetings. For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the elders shall elect one of their number to serve as the president of the corporation, and any other member to serve as a corporate officer.

SECTION 3 – THE SENIOR PASTOR

- (1) The senior pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section 2, above, and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.
- (2) His call shall not be subject to the triennial reaffirmation or to the term limitation set out in Article 5, Section 2, Paragraph 3 for elders. His call shall be defined as per Article 6, Section 3.

- (3) He shall preach on the Lord's Day, administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, and perform such other duties as usually pertain to that office, or as set forth in the constitution.
- (4) In the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor the elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which can be delegated.

SECTION 4 – ASSOCIATE PASTORS

- (1) The church may call additional pastors whose relationship to the senior pastor is that of associate.
- (2) An associate pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section 2, above, and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.
- (3) His call shall not be subject to the triennial reaffirmation or to the term limitation set out in Article 5, Section 2, Paragraph 3 for elders. His call shall be defined as per Article 6, Section 3.
- (4) He shall assist the senior pastor in the performance of his regular duties and shall perform any other duties as usually pertain to the office of pastor, or as set forth in the constitution, or which may be specifically assigned to him by the congregation.
- (5) In the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor for defined periods of time (such as sabbatical or illness), the associate pastor(s) shall assume the responsibility for his duties under the oversight of the elders.

SECTION 5 – OTHER PASTORAL POSITIONS

The elders may create, define, and fill other pastoral positions, leadership positions, and internships. Any compensation associated with these positions shall be approved by the congregation.

SECTION 6 – DEACONS

- (1) The office of deacon is described in 1 Timothy 3:8–13 and Acts 6:1–7. The church shall recognize, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on

elections, men who are giving of themselves in service to the church, and who possess particular gifts of service. These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as deacons. They shall be elected to no more than two terms lasting for a maximum of three years each and may only be elected to a third term after one year. This provision may be over-ridden in order to have a sufficient number of deacons to meet the needs of the church.

- (2) Deacons shall care for the temporal needs of members, attend to the accommodations for public worship, and encourage and support those able to help others and those with gifts of administration.
- (3) The deacons shall receive, hold, and disburse a fund for benevolence, reporting on its use to the elders at their request, and reporting to the church its total receipts and total disbursements only.
- (4) The deacons, with the agreement of the elders, may establish unpaid administrative positions or committees of members to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in the church.

SECTION 7 – CLERK

- (1) It shall be the duty of the clerk to record the minutes of all regular and special business meetings of the church, to preserve an accurate roll of the membership, and to render reports as requested by the pastor, the elders, the deacons, or the church.
- (2) The clerk shall be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation to serve a term of one year.
- (3) In the absence or incapacity of the clerk the elders shall appoint a member to perform the duties of the church clerk.
- (4) For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the clerk shall serve as the secretary of the corporation.
- (5) The church clerk shall ensure that dated copies of the most recent revision of this constitution shall be available for all church members.

SECTION 8 – TREASURER

- (1) The treasurer shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as appropriate. The treasurer shall also be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues and expenses of the church at each business meeting. The responsibility may be delegated with the approval of the elders. The treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. The treasurer shall render to the elders annually, or whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the church.
- (2) The treasurer shall be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation to serve a term of one year.
- (3) For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the treasurer shall serve as the treasurer of the corporation.

ARTICLE 6 – ELECTIONS

SECTION 1 – PRINCIPLES

The process for church elections shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the following principles:

- (a) Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, should be an integral part of the election process;
- (b) Nominations should proceed with the support of the elders;
- (c) All candidates for church office should be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members;
- (d) The election process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration that is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

SECTION 2 – SELECTION OF OFFICERS

- (1) The election of officers shall be held at a business meeting of the church. Names of nominees to serve as elders, deacons, clerk, or treasurer shall be presented by the elders at the previous business meeting (providing that previous meeting occurred at least eight weeks prior), and the election shall proceed as directed by the moderator.
- (2) The elders should seek recommendations and involvement from the general membership in the nomination process. Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the elders. Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their objection to the elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant church business meeting.
- (3) The moderator shall declare elected all men receiving a 75% majority of all votes cast for the office of elder. For all other offices, the moderator shall declare elected all persons receiving a simple majority of all votes cast; abstentions will not be considered as votes cast.
- (4) The persons elected shall assume their respective offices upon election, unless another date has been specifically designated.

SECTION 3 – CALLING OF THE SENIOR PASTOR OR ASSOCIATE PASTORS

In the calling of any man to these positions, the same basic process of calling an elder must be followed. In addition, however, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential senior pastor or associate pastor and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as senior pastor or associate pastor (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of his wife if he is married) must be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a business meeting.

ARTICLE 7 – INDEMNIFICATION

SECTION 1 – MANDATORY INDEMNIFICATION

- (1) If a legal claim or criminal allegation is made against a person because he or she is or was an elder, officer, employee, or agent of the church, the elders shall provide indemnification against liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim if the elders determine (1) that the person acted (a) in good faith, (b) with the care an ordinarily prudent person in a similar position would exercise under similar circumstances, and (c) in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the church, or at least not opposed to its best interests, and (2) that the person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful in the case of any criminal proceeding.
- (2) The termination of any action, suit, or proceeding by judgment, order, settlement, conviction, or on a plea of *nolo contendere* or its equivalent, shall not, of itself, create a presumption that the person did not act in good faith and in a manner that he or she reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the church and, with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, had no reasonable cause to believe that his or her conduct was unlawful.

SECTION 2 – PERMISSIVE INDEMNIFICATION

At the discretion of the elders, the church also may indemnify any person who acted in good faith and reasonably believed that his or her conduct was in the church's best interest and not unlawful.

SECTION 3 – PROCEDURE

- (1) Any indemnification made under this Article, may be made by the church only as authorized in the specific case on a determination that indemnification of the elder, officer, employee or agent of the church is proper in the circumstances because he or she has met the applicable standard of conduct set forth in Section 2, Paragraph 2 of this Article. The determination shall be made (a) by a majority vote of a quorum consisting of the pastor and elders

who were not and are not parties to or threatened with the action, suit, or proceeding; (b) if the described quorum is not obtainable, or, if a majority vote of a quorum of disinterested elders so directs, by independent legal counsel in a written opinion; or (c) if the described independent legal opinion is not obtainable, by a majority vote of the members of the church.

- (2) To the extent that an elder, officer, employee or agent of the church has been successful on the merits or otherwise in defense of any action, suit, or proceeding referred to in this section, or in defense of any claim, issue, or matter in that action, suit, or proceeding, he or she may be indemnified against expenses, including attorneys' fees, actually and reasonably incurred by him or her in connection with the action, suit, or proceeding.
- (3) Expenses of each person seeking indemnification under this Article, may be paid by the church as they are incurred, in advance of the final disposition of the action, suit, or proceeding, as authorized by the board of elders in the specific case, on receipt of an undertaking by or on behalf of the elder, officer, employee or agent of the church to repay the amount if it is ultimately determined that he or she is not qualified to be indemnified by the church.
- (4) The indemnification provided by this Article may continue as to a person who has ceased to be an elder, officer, employee or agent of the church and may inure to the benefit of the heirs, executors, and administrators of that person.

SECTION 4 – MANDATORY NON-INDEMNIFICATION

The church may not indemnify an elder, officer, employee or agent of the church in connection with a proceeding brought against him/her by or in the right of the church, in which he/she was adjudged liable to the church, or where the elder or deacon is charged with receiving an improper personal benefit and he/she is adjudged liable on that basis.

ARTICLE 8 – DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian church (see, e.g., Matthew 18:15–20, 1 Corinthians 6:1–8), the church shall require its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically

based principles, without reliance on the secular courts. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage the use of biblically based principles to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church, whether Christian or pagan and whether individuals or corporate entities.

ARTICLE 9 – AMENDMENTS

The Statement of Faith and Church Covenant may be amended by a three-quarters vote of the members present and voting at a business meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous business meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote. This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a business meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous business meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote. Motions to amend the proposed amendments are in order, but any such motion must be germane to the originally proposed amendments. No other motion to amend the constitution shall be in order. The revised version of this constitution shall be made available to all church members by the church clerk.

ARTICLE 10 – OTHER PROVISIONS

SECTION 1 – POSITION ON MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

In keeping with the historical position of our church and the Southern Baptist Convention, we hold fast to the “Baptist Faith And Message” most recently adopted on June 14th, 2000, which states:

XVIII. The Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption. Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God’s unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the

channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race. The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation. Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

We as the Church of Jesus Christ will uphold the Biblical definition of marriage and family. Therefore, we do not condone same-sex marriage or same-sex sexual relationships, neither will we perform, nor house any religious or civil ceremonies in support of the same. We believe that God has created the family to be the building block upon which we are developed, loved, and shaped spiritually. Marriage is clearly defined, once and for all in the Bible. Based on the Biblical definition, we affirm that marriage is a covenant between one man and one woman, which is designed and ordained by God for companionship, procreation, and prevention of sexual sin. We believe that life begins at the moment of conception, and children are a gift and a heritage from the Lord. We believe that mother and father are given to lead and instruct children through life, to teach them God's Word, lead them to Christ, and to assist them in becoming who God has designed them to be. We further affirm that sexual intimacy is to be expressed and experienced only within the constraints of marriage.

AMENDMENT HISTORY

- February 10, 2018. The congregation adopted this constitution as a wholesale revision of a prior constitution.
- July 26, 2026. The congregation replaced Article 3, Section 5, Paragraph 3 with new Paragraphs 3 and 4.

THE NEW HAMPSHIRE CONFESSION OF FAITH (1853)

- (1) ***Of 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 opinions should be tried.
- (2) ***Of the True God*** We believe 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; 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 and harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.
- (3) ***Of the Fall of Man*** We believe that man was created in holiness, under the law of his Maker; but by voluntary transgression 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 the law of God, positively inclined to evil; and therefore under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defense or excuse.
- (4) ***Of the Way of Salvation*** 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 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 every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all-sufficient Savior.

- (5) ***Of Justification*** We believe 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 principles 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.
- (6) ***Of the Freeness of Salvation*** We believe 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 a cordial, penitent, and obedient faith; and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel; which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation.
- (7) ***Of Grace in Regeneration*** We believe 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 effected 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.
- (8) ***Of Repentance and Faith*** We believe 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.
- (9) ***Of God's Purpose of Grace*** We believe 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 it 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.

- (10) ***Of Sanctification*** We believe 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.
- (11) ***Of the Perseverance of Saints*** We believe that such only are real believers as endure unto 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.
- (12) ***Of the Harmony of the Law and the Gospel*** We believe 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 arises 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.
- (13) ***Of a Gospel Church*** We believe 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.
- (14) ***Of Baptism and the Lord's Supper*** We believe 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.

- (15) ***Of the Christian Sabbath*** We believe 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 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.
- (16) ***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 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.
- (17) ***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, 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.
- (18) ***Of the World to Come*** We believe that the end of the world is approaching; that at the last day Christ will descend from heaven, and raise the dead from the grave to 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.

THE COVENANT OF OLNEY BAPTIST CHURCH

Having been led, as we believe, by the Holy Spirit of God to receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and having been baptized by immersion in accordance with Christ's command, we do now in the presence of God and our fellow members solemnly enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

It is my earnest desire and intent that with His help, I will express and exemplify my new life in Christ in my every relationship. I will cultivate and deepen my fellowship with God by daily prayer, Bible reading, and meditation. I will seek to love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength; to maintain an attitude of openness to the presence, guidance, and power of His Spirit; and to treat my body with the honor, respect, and purity due His temple.

I will do all within my power to make my home truly Christian. To this end, I will maintain regular family worship, and seek to exemplify the Spirit of Jesus in my relationships with all members of my family.

I accept the responsibility for this church's upbuilding, and to this end I commit myself to wholeheartedly support this church in its local and world-wide ministry with my time, abilities, and possessions. I will strive for the unity of the church, praying for, helping, forgiving, and being considerate toward my fellow members in Christian love.

I am determined that my love and obedience to Jesus be exemplified in my every relationship in the world. I will seek first His Kingdom, and will strive to avoid being ensnared by the standards and values of the world. I accept as a privilege the task of introducing others to Him, and will refrain from anything that would mar the witness of my life and lips.

Realizing my own inadequacy, I will earnestly seek the help of the Holy Spirit and the fellowship of the church in the accomplishment of these purposes, to the glory of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.