

# Washtenaw Independent Bible Church Constitution

## **INTRODUCTION**

This constitution is intended to describe our present understanding of New Testament church order and our application of it today. We desire to regulate our affairs by the Word of God. Thus we have tried to keep this statement brief. We resolve to turn, not here, but to the Scriptures, when questions arise.

Should we discover discrepancies between this constitution and the Scriptures, we intend to update this document promptly, in a decent and orderly fashion.

## **CHURCH COVENANT**

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on this profession of our faith, having been scripturally baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God and this congregation, enter into a solemn and joyful covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, we will walk together in Christian love and work for the advancement of this local church through knowledge, ordinances, and doctrines, as given in the Scriptures. We endeavor to give it preeminence over all worldly institutions, to spread the gospel to all nations through missions and our own witness, and to aid those in need.

We maintain that the family is one of the most important cornerstones of the church and should be kept strong through family and personal devotions, and consistent Bible study.

Understanding Christian liberty, we covenant together to abstain from any appearance of evil, striving always to avoid being a stumbling block to any fellow believer.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to support each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to display Christian love in feeling, action and speech; to be slow to take offence, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the example of our Savior.

## **PREAMBLE & PURPOSE**

The central purpose of this church shall be teaching the Word of God both among God's people and to unbelievers, providing for fellowship among believers, remembering the Lord Jesus in the breaking of bread, and corporate prayer (Acts 2:42).

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## **I. NAME AND INCORPORATION**

A. This organization shall be known as Washtenaw Independent Bible Church.

B. This church shall be incorporated in accordance with the laws of the State of Michigan under provisions of the "Articles of Association" for ecclesiastical bodies within the state.

C. This organization is organized and operated exclusively for purposes described in section 501(c)(3) Internal Revenue Code. (Religious Organizations)

## **II. ARTICLES OF FAITH**

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos 3:3

We agree that the Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books accepted in common across Christendom, is the Word of God, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, without error in the original manuscripts and providentially preserved in the manuscripts that survive to our day, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of our faith and practice.

The doctrines on which we agree include those stated in the ancient formula commonly known as the Apostle's Creed.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; The third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy universal church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.

We further agree on three points that are not explicit in the Apostle's Creed.

1. When the Lord Jesus returns, he will rule physically over a restored earth before the final judgment (Rev. 20).
2. The universal church finds expression in autonomous local assemblies of believers (such as ourselves) who seek to fulfill the functions of Acts 2:42 by following the patterns and principles exemplified by the early church and documented in the book of Acts and the epistles, and every believer should actively participate in such an assembly (Heb 10:25).
3. A prerequisite for fellowship in the local church is water baptism (Acts 2:41, 42), and a prerequisite for water baptism is a profession of faith in Christ on the part of the one being baptized (1 Pet 3:21).

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## III. CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

We welcome to fellowship at the Breaking of Bread Meeting any person who has accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior, has been scripturally baptized, and is not walking in clear disobedience to the Lord. Such a person may be received into fellowship upon the recommendation of a brother already in fellowship who personally knows the candidate's testimony (Acts 9:26-28), or by sharing his testimony of salvation with one or more of the men prior to the meeting.

A Letter of Transfer will be provided to those in fellowship upon request.

If a person in fellowship with the church regularly behaves in a manner inconsistent with Scripture, that person may be denied fellowship, following the process outlined in Matthew 18:15-17.

## IV. GENERAL OFFICERS

### Section A. – Voting body

When this section calls on the church at large to vote, those eligible to vote are male heads of households in regular fellowship in the church (present at a majority of the scheduled meetings in the three months previous to the vote).

### Section B. – Men's Council

1. Council Membership – Until replaced by Elders (section “C” below) a Men's Council shall be responsible for oversight of the spiritual well being and business needs of the church. This council shall be elected annually by a majority of the church voting body from the male heads of households who are in regular fellowship at the scheduled meetings of the church and who are in agreement with the Church Covenant and Articles of Faith.
2. Officers - The Men's Council shall annually elect a chairman, secretary and church treasurer, and any other officers needed. These officers have no authority to establish church policy apart from the Council to which they each contribute the same vote as any other member.
  - a. The **chairman** shall moderate or appoint a moderator for all meetings of the Men's Council or church at which such a position is necessary.
  - b. The **secretary** shall keep a suitable record of all the actions of the church, including all baptisms. The secretary shall notify all officers and members of committees of their election or appointment. He shall issue letters of dismissal voted upon by the church. Also, there shall be a proper file of all correspondence concerning the church, as well as giving notice of all meetings where such notice is required.
  - c. The **Treasurer** shall receive, preserve, and pay out upon receipt of vouchers, all money or things of value paid to the church, keeping at all times an itemized account of all the receipts and disbursements. All books and records of the treasurer shall be considered property of the church. The treasurer shall file an annual report of all receipts and disbursements for the year ending August thirty-first. The books of the church shall be open at all times for inspection of

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the membership, with the exception of the individual records of giving. The treasurer shall deliver to the contributors of the church, upon request, a yearly accounting of their giving.

### 3. Conduct of business

- a. Meetings - At the end of each council meeting, the time and place of the next meeting shall be announced, if available. Otherwise, the time and place of meeting may be arranged at any regular public meeting of the church.
- b. Quorum - A quorum shall consist of the members of the council present at a duly announced meeting.
- c. Voting - Whenever a vote is called and the council is not of one mind:
  - i. any vote taken on the matter shall be null and void (1 Corinthians 1:10);
  - ii. the question shall be announced at a regular public meeting of the church with a request for prayer for the Lord's guidance; and
  - iii. a vote may be taken at a council meeting following that public meeting.

We expect that lack of one mind may arise for a variety of reasons, including the conviction of a brother that the council membership is not adequately represented at the meeting. Also, a brother who is undecided about a question may abstain from voting without nullifying the vote on that question. A defendant in a disciplinary action has no vote in decisions connected with that action.

### Section C – Elders

1. At such time that the Men's Council, by unanimous agreement, recognizes that men in the assembly are qualified (I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9) to serve as Elders, they shall nominate these men to the voting body of the church for appointment by unanimous vote. Upon ratification by the voting body, the Elders shall assume all responsibilities of the Men's Council.
2. Subsequent elders shall be nominated by the elders and appointed by unanimous agreement of the voting body.
3. Not fewer than two elders shall be appointed. If only one man is qualified, then responsibility for oversight of the spiritual well being and business affairs of the church shall return to the men's council.
4. Should a charge be raised against an elder, it may be presented to the voting body upon unanimous recommendation of the other elders. Upon unanimous vote of the voting body, the accused elder shall no longer be recognized. The accused elder shall have no vote in these decisions.

### Section D – Deacons

Deacons may be chosen in accordance with the procedure outlined in Acts 6:2-6 to assist the Elders as the Elders may request. No man shall be presented to the church for the candidacy of deaconship without proper consultation with the candidate and his wife by the Elders.

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## **V. CHURCH FINANCE**

### Section A – Raising of Funds

The means of raising funds for the church shall be by free-will tithes and offerings. No other means of receiving monies will be accepted. Special offerings may be sought by the church or by any of its organizations upon approval of the Men's Council. This does not preclude individuals making special offerings as the Spirit of God may move.

### Section B – Handling of Funds

The church shall have only one general account. There shall be no accounts separate from the church. The Men's Council shall be charged with the responsibility of receiving and disbursing the funds of the church.

### Section C – Budget and Financial Reports

The Men's Council, in consultation with the treasurer, shall prepare and present to the church annually a projection of expected regular expenses, and a report of expenditures and income for the previous year. The fiscal year ends August 31. Payment of all items included in the church budget shall not require further action. All non-budgeted items must be brought before the Men's Council for action.

## **VI. PUBLIC MEETINGS**

Regular meetings of the church for prayer and worship may include announcement of Men's Council decisions, presentation of reports such as the annual financial report, and presentation of church business requiring a Men's Council decision based on church discussion and prayer.

## **VII. DISSOLUTION**

In the event of dissolution, all assets, real and personal, shall be distributed to such organizations as are qualified as tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (religious organizations) or the corresponding provisions of a future United States Internal Revenue Law. No part of the net earnings of this corporation shall ever inure to the benefit of any donor, member, director or officer of the corporation. Neither shall any private individual be entitled to share in the distribution of any of the corporation assets. Upon dissolution, any assets of the corporation must be distributed to a church or churches of like faith and order as determined by the Men's Council.