

CHURCH CONSTITUTION OF NOVUM BAPTIST CHURCH

As of May 15, 2017

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CHURCH CONSTITUTION OF NOVUM BAPTIST CHURCH

Preamble

We declare and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith and to govern the body in an orderly manner. This constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual church member and the freedom of action of this body in relation to other churches.

I. Name

This body shall be known as Novum Baptist Church.

II. Objectives

1. To be a dynamic spiritual organism empowered by the Holy Spirit to share Christ with as many people as possible in our church, community, nation, and throughout the world.
2. To be a worshipping fellowship, experiencing an awareness of God, recognizing and praising His person, and seeking and responding in obedience to His leadership.
3. To be a church that experiences an increasingly meaningful fellowship with God and fellow believers.
4. To be a church that helps people obtain and experience a growing knowledge of God and man and the relationships between them.
5. To be a church that ministers unselfishly to persons in the community, nation and world in Jesus' name.
6. To be a church that encourages its members and other Christians to be Christ-like in their daily living by emphasizing total commitment of life, personality, and possessions to the Lordship of Christ.
7. To be a church that continues to pursue the goals and purposes of the Christians who founded it as they are expressed in the Church Covenant of 1911.

III. Church Covenant of 1911

Having been, as we trust, brought by Divine Grace to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up wholly to Him we do now solemnly and joyfully covenant with each other to walk together with Him in brotherly love, to His glory as our common Lord. We do therefore in His strength engage:

1. That we will exercise a mutual care, as members of one another, to promote the growth of the whole body in Christian knowledge, holiness and comfort to the end that we may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.
2. That to promote and secure this objective, we will uphold the public worship of God and the ordinances of His house and hold constant communication with each other therein.
3. That we will cheerfully contribute of our property for the support of the poor and for the maintenance of a faithful ministry of the Gospel among us.
4. That we will not omit closed and family religion at home, nor allow ourselves in the too common neglect of the great duty of religiously training up our children and those under our care with a view to the service of Christ and the enjoyment of Heaven.
5. That we will walk circumspectly in the world that we may win their souls, remembering that God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind; that we are the light of the world and the salt of the earth, and that a city set on a hill cannot be hid.
6. That we will frequently exhort and, if occasion shall require, admonish one another according to Matthew 18, in the spirit of meekness, considering ourselves lest we also be tempted, and that as in baptism we have been buried with Christ, and raised again, so there is on us a special obligation henceforth to walk in the newness of life.

And may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do His will; working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen!

IV. Statement of Basic Beliefs

A. The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of

Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.

B. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. To Him, we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

1. God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

2. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself the demands and necessities of human nature and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, partaking of the nature of God and of man, and in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever-present Lord.

3. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts of sin. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the assurance of God to bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

C. Man

Man was created by the special act of God, in His own image, and is the crowning work of His creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race.

Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God and fell from his original innocence: whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin, and as soon as they are capable of moral action become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. A central aspect of the creative purpose of God for Man is the sacrament of marriage which the Scripture has defined as being between one man and one woman. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore every man possesses dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

D. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, sanctification, and glorification.

1. **Regeneration**, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principle of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification is God gracious and full acquittal upon principle of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer into a relationship of peace and favor with God.
2. **Sanctification** is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual perfection through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.
3. **Glorification** is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

E. God's Purpose of Grace

1. **Election** is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is a glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.
2. All true believers have a **secure state of grace** and endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation,

whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, bring reproach on the cause of Christ, and temporal judgments on themselves, yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

F. Marriage and the Family.

The family is God's plan as the basic building block of His creation. Because of the temptation and dangers of sexual immorality inherent to mankind, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. (1 Cor. 7:2) Each husband should love his wife as he loves himself. (Eph. 5:28 and 33a). Each wife should respect her husband. (Eph. 5:33b). Parents should train up their children in the way they should go and when the children are old they will not depart from it. (Prov. 22:6) Children should obey their parents for this is the first commandment with a promise. (Eph. 6:2).

G. The Church

1. A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a **local body of baptized believers** who are associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, observing the two ordinances of Christ, committed to His teachings, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.
2. This church is an **autonomous body, operating through democratic processes** under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In such a congregation members are equally responsible. Its Scriptural officers are pastors and deacons.
3. The New Testament speaks also of **the church as the body of Christ** which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages.

H. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

1. Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in the newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.
2. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

I. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should be employed in exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private, and by refraining from worldly

amusements, and resting from secular employments, work of necessity and mercy only being excepted.

J. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and that God's Will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

K. Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous, in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

L. Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by personal effort and by all other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

M. Education

1. The cause of education in the kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. **An adequate system of Christian schools** is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.
2. In Christian education there should be **a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility**. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the preeminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.

N. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debt to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

O. Cooperation

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

P. The Christian and the Social Order

Every Christian is under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in his own life and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Christ Jesus. The Christian should oppose, in the spirit of Christ, every form of greed, selfishness, vice and deviation from the moral standards of the Bible. He should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

Q. Peace and War

1. **It is the duty of Christians to seek peace** with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

2. **The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord.** The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love.

R. Religious Liberty

God alone is the Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained by God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

V. Polity and Relationships

1. The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. Persons duly received by the members shall constitute the membership. (See Article I of the bylaws.)
2. Since marriage is the core unit of government and the first institution that God created, no church governance can be contrary to that design. (See IV(c) and (f) of this Constitution, above.)
3. All internal groups created and empowered by the church shall report to and be accountable only to the church, unless otherwise specified by church action.
4. This church is not subject to the control of any other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation which are common among Baptist churches. Insofar as practical, this church will cooperate with and participate in the local association, the state convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention. (Any changes in affiliation shall constitute an amendment to this constitution and shall be governed by Article VIII of the bylaws.)