

DRAFT

CONSTITUTION AND BY LAWS THE UNION BAPTIST CHURCH OF SWISSVALE

Preamble

That all things might be done decently and in order (I Cor 14:40), the constitution of Union Baptist Church of Swissvale shall be composed of its Covenant of Membership, Statement of Faith and Bylaws. It is not intended to replace the authority of Scripture over the church. The purpose of this Constitution is to set forth our agreed upon principles of governance, worship and service.

Article 1 Name and Purpose

Section 1 Name

This organization shall be known as the Union Baptist Church of Swissvale, Incorporated.

Section 2 Mission Statement

Our Mission Statement is Healing, Lives, Inspiring Hope, Glorifying God

Section 3 Vision Statement

We are a growing, expansive, family-oriented, inter-generational & multicultural church. We are committed to teaching the Word of God and advancing the Kingdom through sharing the hope of Christ.

We have a heart for the community and believe that healthy families create health churches which create health societies. We exalt God in all we do in prayer, worship, service and living.

Section 4 Core Values

- 4.1 Evangelism – We believe that Christians are excited about Jesus Christ and are led by the Spirit to study the Word of God and boldly share the Gospel.
- 4.2 Discipleship – We believe that teaching and learning the Word of God completes and equips people to do ministry.
- 4.3 Stewardship – We believe that God is generous with His gifts of time, talent and treasure. In gratitude, we cultivate, share and return what we have received.
- 4.5 Servanthood – We believe that we are servants of Christ who willingly and lovingly care for others.

Section 5 Purpose

The Union Baptist Church of Swissvale, believing the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and is the sole authority for faith and practice; acknowledging the Bible's adherence to all the teachings of Jesus Christ, declares its purpose:

- 5.1 To maintain regular devotional, prayer, and public worship services. (Heb 10:25 and Psalm 100:1-5)
- 5.2 To preach and teach the gospel message and urge its personal acceptance .in the effort to establish the kingdom of God throughout the world. (Matt 28:19-20)
- 5.3 To offer regular Christian education opportunities including Bible study, mentoring, small groups, and leadership development. (2 Tim 2:15)
- 5.4 To identify, cultivate and employ the spiritual gifts and talents given to each believer for edification of the body of Christ for service and ministry. (Romans 12:3-8)
- 5.5 To provide regular fellowship opportunities that bring together, unify, and promote deeper relationships within the local assembly. (Acts 2:42)
- 5.6 To assist and provide resources for people in their individual spiritual growth and development. (2 Peter 1:5-8)
- 5.7 To be committed to the promotion of social justice in the local community and the community at large through the biblical principles of justice, love and mercy. (Micah 6:8)

Article 2 Statement of Faith

Identify Statement - We Are American Baptists¹

An Expression of Christian Faith Representative of American Baptists adopted by the General Board, American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., November 2005.

American Baptists worship the triune God of the Bible, who is eternally one God in three persons. This one, true God is most clearly revealed to us in the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

¹Adapted from An Expression of Christian Faith Representative of American Baptists adopted by the General Board, American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., November 2005

American Baptists proclaim the Good News of the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, knowing that salvation (forgiveness of sins, release from guilt and condemnation, reconciliation with God) and eternal life are granted in grace to all who trust Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. This Gospel is the central message of the Bible.

American Baptists believe that the Bible, composed of the Old and New Testaments, is the divinely inspired Word of God, the final written authority and trustworthy for faith and practice. It is to be interpreted responsibly under the guidance of the Holy Spirit within the community of faith. The primary purpose of the Bible is to point to Jesus Christ, the living Lord of the Church.

Although Baptists have produced numerous confessions to express our common understandings of Christian faith, we hold the Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, as our final authority. We accept no humanly devised confession or creed as binding.

American Baptists affirm that God is sovereign over all and that this sovereignty is expressed and realized through Jesus Christ. Therefore, we affirm the Lordship of Christ over the world and the church. We joyously confess that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord. We are called in loyalty to Jesus Christ to proclaim the power of the Holy Spirit, the Good News of God's reconciling grace, and to declare the saving power of the Gospel to every human being and to every human institution. We celebrate Christ's charge to "make disciples of all nations" and to bear witness to God's redeeming reign in human affairs.

American Baptists are summoned to this mission in common with all Christians. With the whole body of Christ, we also believe that God has been revealed in Jesus Christ as in no other, and that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:18). We anticipate the day when every creature and all creation, on earth and beyond, will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11).

God has given this particular community of believers called Baptists a distinctive history and experience. As we share in common with Christians everywhere, so Baptists everywhere celebrate a common heritage.

THEREFORE

With Baptist brothers and sisters around the world, we believe:

- That the Bible is the final authority and trustworthy for faith and practice. It is to be interpreted responsibly under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit within the community of faith;
- That the Church is a gathered fellowship of regenerated believers, a sign of the coming universal reign of God;
- That the freedom to respond to the Lordship of Christ in all circumstances is fundamental to the Christian gospel and to human dignity; and

- That witness to Christ is the ongoing task of every Christian and of every church.
- Within the larger Baptist family, American Baptists emphasize convictions which direct our special task and ministry.

We affirm that God through Jesus Christ calls us to be:

A Redeemed People

- who claim a personal relationship to God through Jesus Christ;
- who follow the Lord in believer's baptism;
- who gather as a believer's church;
- who share in the meal of the kingdom known as the Lord's Supper;
- who honor the priesthood of all believers; and
- who live their faith as visible saints.

A Biblical People

- who affirm the centrality of Scripture in our lives;
- who pursue the study of God's inspired Word as a mandate for faith and practice; and
- who seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the understanding of Scripture, while respecting the common interpretation of Scripture within the community of believers.
- Who submit to the teaching of Scripture that God's design for sexual intimacy places it within the context of marriage between one man and one woman.

A Worshiping People

- who gather regularly to praise God;
- who receive nourishment by communion with the Risen Christ;
- who share an open and public confession of faith; and
- who believe that personal devotion brings vitality to corporate celebration.

A Mission People

- who strive to fulfill the Great Commission to make disciples;
- who invite persons to receive salvation and follow Christ;
- who engage in educational, social, and health ministries;
- who seek justice for all persons; and
- who provide prayer and financial support to sustain a worldwide mission outreach.

An Interdependent People

- who affirm the Church's unity as given in Jesus Christ;
- who gladly embody in our practice the ministry of the whole people of God;
- who recognize the gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT for ministry and honor all offices of the five-fold ministry;
- who live and work together "in association"; and
- who bring the free church tradition to cooperative and ecumenical Christianity.

A Caring People

- who care for the needy, the weak, and the oppressed;
- who care for the earth and for all its creatures.

An Inclusive People

- who, gifted by a variety of backgrounds, find unity in diversity and diversity in unity;
- who embrace a pluralism of race, ethnicity, and gender; and
- who acknowledge that there are individual differences of conviction and theology.
- who supports the call of both men and women to the gospel ministry.

A Contemporary People

- who have a remembrance for the past and a vision for the future;
- who are committed to religious liberty and to the separation of church and state;

- who call our present world to make Jesus Christ Lord of all life; and
- who trust the Holy Spirit for insight and power to live in the present age.

We further believe

- That God has called us forth to such an hour as this;
- That we live with a realizable hope;
- That all things are held together in Christ;
- That all creation will find its ultimate fulfillment in God;
- That we shall see the One whose we are; and
- That Jesus shall reign for ever and ever.

Article 3 Membership

Section 1 Methods of Membership

Membership of Union Baptist Church of Swissvale shall be comprised of persons who have joined by Baptism, Letter of Transfer or Christian Experience.

- 1.1 **Membership by Baptism** - Persons receiving Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior shall be received into membership provided they are baptized, complete new members classes, and are given the right hand of fellowship at Union Baptist Church of Swissvale.
- 1.2 **Membership by Letter of Transfer** - Members from other Baptist churches, shall be received into membership provided they present a letter of transfer from their former church, complete new members classes, and are given the right hand of fellowship at Union Baptist Church of Swissvale.
- 1.3 **Membership by Christian Experience** - Persons who have received Jesus Christ as their lord and savior and have been baptized, shall be received into membership provided they complete New Members classes and are given the right hand of fellowship at Union Baptist Church of Swissvale.

Section 2 Membership Status

We covenant as a church, that active involvement in a local church body is essential to growth and development for our Christian relationship. (Hebrews 10:25) As such we have identified the following membership statuses to help us better serve the needs of the congregation. When a member becomes inactive, it is our desire to work as a church to welcome them back into active fellowship. Membership status shall be determined in the following ways:

- 2.1 **Active Membership** – Any member who participates in worship services, discipleship opportunities and/or ministry functions at least four times each calendar year and faithfully gives tithes and offerings each calendar year. Active members have voting rights and are eligible for leadership opportunities.
- 2.2 **Inactive Membership** – Any member who has not participated in worship services, discipleship opportunities and/or minister functions at least four times during a calendar year and who has not been faithful in giving of tithes and offerings shall be considered an inactive member. This excludes those who are sick and shut in, incarcerated, serving in the military, and attending college out of town.

- 2.3 Watch Care** – Any member who has temporarily relocated outside of the geographic area, who is in fellowship with another ministry and under the spiritual supervision of a pastor, can maintain their active membership. Persons who are connected to another church who have temporarily relocated to our geographic area and are in regular fellowship with our church will be considered watch care members under the supervision of the pastor. They will have all the basic rights of membership with the exception of voting.

Section 3 Methods of Separation

- 3.1 Letter of Transfer** – Any member in good and regular standing shall upon request be given a letter of transfer to unite with another church.
- 3.2** A member who has been in inactive membership status for a calendar year will automatically be removed from membership in the Union Baptist Church.
- 3.3 Church Discipline**
Exclusion in accordance with Church Discipline Policy

Article 4 Organization

Section 1 Officers - All church officers must be members of the church in good standing.

1.1 Senior Pastor

- 1.1.1** The qualifications for pastor shall be consistent with those listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. His training, skills, and experiences are needed in this area of leadership.
- 1.1.2** The responsibilities of the Senior Pastor:
- These generally fall into the following areas: Preaching, teaching, shepherding, pastoral counseling, administration, planning, and guiding the church to grow and fulfill its purposes.
 - He shall lead the church, the organizations, and all leaders of the church in performing their tasks in worship, proclamation, education, community involvement and evangelism.
 - The pastor shall be an ex officio member of all church standing committees, except the Pastor's Selection Committee.
- 1.1.3** The Call of the Senior Pastor:

- A pastor shall be chosen and called whenever a vacancy occurs.
- A Pastor's Selection Committee shall be appointed by the church to seek out a suitable pastor and this committee's recommendation will serve as a nomination.
- The Pastor's Selection Committee will recommend only one candidate at a time.
- The pastor's election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one week notice shall be given to the members.
- An affirmative vote of three-fourths (3/4) of those present is necessary for a choice.

1.1.4 Terms of Office:

- The chosen pastor shall serve his/her term until he/she resigns or the relationship is terminated at the request of the church.
- There shall be a written mutual agreement made between the pastor and the church.

1.2 Diaconate Ministry (lifelong or term service)

1.2.1 Term of Office of Deacons:

- Upon ordination, deacons may serve for an indefinite period of time, however, they shall reaffirm commitment to active ministry every seventh (7th) year.
- Emeritus status may be bestowed upon the retirement from service at the discretion of the Diaconate Ministry in consultation with the Senior Pastor.
- Deacons shall serve their term until they resign or the relationship is terminated at the request of the church.

1.2.2 The Qualifications of a Deacon:

- A church deacon must meet the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
- A deacon shall demonstrate an exemplary Christian testimony in private, family, and public life; a committed Christian leader and partner of the pastor; supporter and promoter of the church faith, practice, programs, and ministries.

1.2.3 Selection of Deacons:

- The Senior Pastor and Diaconate Ministry may invite active members to begin a discernment process for the call to the office of Deacon.
- The duties, qualifications, and importance of the office of a deacon will be explained during the process of discernment.

- All slate of candidates shall be presented at a regular church business meeting for approval to proceed with the ordination process.

1.2.4 Ordination of Deacons:

- When ordination of deacons is planned by the church, it shall authorize the pastor to assemble a council to examine the candidates concerning their fitness/readiness to serve as deacons.
- The council directed to examine the deacons shall be composed of the pastor, invited ordained pastors, and deacons of neighboring Baptist churches.
- The Ordination service will take place once the council determines the candidate is fit/ready to serve.
- A vote of the membership present will occur during the ordination service to officially confirm the candidates for Diaconate Ministry.

1.2.5 Duties of Deacons:

- Deacons shall elect the chairman of their ministry.
- Deacons serve as a committee of counsel to assist the pastor concerning the progress and welfare of the church.
- Deacons assist the pastor in ministering to the members by implementing the Deacon Family Ministry.
- Deacons assist the Pastor or his/her designate in visiting and serving communion to the sick and shut-in of the church.
- Deacons assist in the discipling of congregants assigned to their care.
- Deacons seek to solve any fellowship problem of the church.
- Deacons assist the pastor in administering the church ordinances.

1.3 Trustee Ministry

1.3.1 Term of Office

- Trustees shall be elected to a term of three years, at the beginning of the calendar year, or at such other times as the church may deem necessary.
- Trustees may serve for two consecutive terms, or until their successors have been duly elected and qualified.
- Trustees shall be eligible for reelection after three years.
- Trustees shall serve their term until they resign or the relationship is terminated at the request of the church.

1.3.2 The Qualifications of a Trustee:

- The character and devotion of a trustee should equal that of a deacon as indicated in 1 Timothy 3:8-13
- A trustee shall demonstrate an exemplary Christian testimony in private, family, and public life; a committed Christian leader

and partner of the pastor; supporter and promoter of the church faith, practice, programs, and ministries.

- The trustee shall be a person of honesty combined with practicality, thriftiness, financial ability, and good judgement.

1.3.3 Selection of Trustees:

- The Senior Pastor and Trustee Ministry may invite active members to begin a discernment process for the call to the office of Trustee.
- The duties, qualifications, and importance of the office of a trustee will be explained during the process of discernment.

1.3.4 Duties of Trustees:

- As stewards, trustees hold in trust for the church membership the material possessions that have accrued to the church.
- It shall be the function of the trustees to sign any, and all legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or lease of church property or any other legal documents requiring the signature of the trustees for and in behalf of the church.
- Supervising the receipts and disbursement of all monies paid or given to the Church
- Supervising the payment of all salaries and accounts according to the annual budget of the Church. Any other expenditure shall be made upon authorization of the Joint Board.
- Trustees are responsible for seeing that the offerings are properly received, counted, and deposited in the church's bank account.

1.4 Moderator

1.4.1 The Moderator shall coordinate and facilitate productive church business in an orderly and efficient manner, and to be the keeper of fellowship.

1.4.2 The Pastor shall serve as the Moderator for Church Meetings, except when matters concerning the office of pastor are considered.

1.4.2 At the discretion of the pastor, a designee chosen from the membership may be assigned to serve as Moderator.

1.4.3 If the office of the pastor is vacant or the pastor is unable to select a designee to moderate, the Executive Minister or a member of the pastoral staff will serve as moderator.

1.5 Clerk

1.5.1 When a Church Administrator is employed, the person who holds the position will serve as the Church Clerk. If there is no Church

Administrator employed, the Church Clerk will be appointed by the pastor and approved by the church.

- 1.5.2. The church clerk is responsible for recording, processing, and maintaining accurate records of all church business meeting transactions, and preparing the annual church profile.
- 1.5.3 The church clerk shall maintain an accurate church membership roll that includes the names and addresses of the church members, with dates of admission and dismissal, baptisms, dedications of children, and deaths.
- 1.5.4 The church clerk shall prepare letters of transfer of membership.

1.6 Treasurer

- 1.6.1 When an Executive Minister is employed, the person who holds the position will serve as the Church Treasurer. If there is no Executive Minister employed, the Church Treasurer will be appointed by the pastor and approved by the church.
- 1.6.2 The Treasurer, along with other authorized members of the church, shall act as the custodian of all moneys of the church and shall disburse these moneys by checks as authorized by the church.
- 1.6.3 The Treasurer serves as financial officer of the congregation
- 1.6.4 The Treasurer is responsible for payment of all bills, invoices, and charges
- 1.6.5 Performs or oversees all of the financial recordkeeping functions
- 1.6.6 Prepares the financial reports for the Joint Board and provides appropriate financial information to the church and gift acknowledgments to donors
- 1.6.7 The Treasurers files all of the required federal, state, and local tax forms
- 1.6.8 The Treasurer monitors the cash position of the congregation and invests available funds in accordance with church investment policies
- 1.6.9 The Treasurer is empowered to borrow funds as directed by the church board
- 1.6.10 The Treasurer assists in the preparation of the annual church budget
- 1.6.11 The Treasurer serves as an ex-officio member of the Joint Board.

1.7 Other Church Officers

- 1.7.1 Other Church officers may be elected to serve with such duties as may be determined by the Church.

Section 2 Joint Board

The Joint Board is the governing board of the Church and makes decisions on matters referred to them by the Pastor, Diaconate Ministry and/or Trustees Ministry. The Joint Board at its discretion may bring up issues or make recommendations to the Church body concerning Church affairs.

2.1 Membership – The Joint Board consists of the following members:

- 2.1.1 Senior Pastor
- 2.1.2 Diaconate Ministry
- 2.1.3 Trustee Ministry

2.2 Responsibilities

- 2.2.1 To discuss and/or act upon any and all delegated matters deemed to be of general interest and welfare of the Church congregation.
- 2.2.2 To make complete reports on the state of the business of the Church at each General Meeting.
- 2.2.3 To set the strategic plan and focus of the church
- 2.2.4 To prepare and approve a preliminary budget to present to the congregation for approval
- 2.2.5 To consider recommendations of new ministers, deacons, and/or trustees prior to presenting to the congregation

2.3 Meetings

2.3.1 Regular Meetings

The Joint Board will meet on a date and frequency determined by the Pastor, and Chairs of each of the Diaconate Ministry and the Trustees Ministry. If said meeting falls on a holiday, the Pastor and Chairs of the Diaconate Ministry and the Trustees Ministry will jointly establish a subsequent date.

2.3.2 Special Meetings

Special Meetings of the Joint Board may be called upon request of the Pastor, the Chair of the Diaconate Ministry or Trustee Ministry, or upon request of two (2) or more of the ministries members. All members of the Joint Board must be notified of the Special Meeting at the earliest possible time.

2.3.3 Quorum

A majority (51%) of the members of the Joint Board shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business as long as there are at least two Deacons and two Trustees present.

2.3.4 Voting

Each voting member of the Joint Board shall have one (1) vote.

2.3.5 Chair

The Senior Pastor presides over the Joint Board meetings. A designee will be designated in the Senior Pastor's absence

Section 3 Committees

3.1 Standing Committees

- 3.1.1 Standing committees are open to any active member.
- 3.1.2 Standing Committees reports to the Joint Board and shall be chaired by a member of the Joint Board.
- 3.1.3 Standing committee may have no more than ten members.
- 3.1.4 Standing committees may include, but not be limited to, Finance, Personnel, Properties and Nominating.

3.2 Ad Hoc Committees

- 3.2.1 The Joint Board may establish ad hoc committees. Each ad hoc committee shall function until its purpose is accomplished.
- 3.2.2 An ad hoc committee may have as many members as the Joint Board feels is appropriate.
- 3.2.3 The Joint Board shall specify the manner in which each ad hoc committee will submit its reports.
- 3.2.4 Chairs of ad hoc committees shall be appointed by the Joint Board.
- 3.2.5 Ad hoc committee members must be active member.

Section 4 Spiritual Leaders

Union Baptist Church recognizes that ministries can be a valuable part of the Christian experience. Ministries provide opportunities for members to express diverse interests, build leadership skills, develop meaningful relationships, work collaboratively to enrich the Christian life experience and utilize their spiritual gifts for the service of the Kingdom of God.

- 4.1 Official Ministries (as defined by the UBC Ministry Handbook) are required to designate one "Spiritual Leader" and one "authorized representative". The "Spiritual Leader" is the primary contact and spokesperson for the Ministry and the person with whom Union Baptist Church will communicate about matters related to Ministries.

"Authorized representatives" are members designated by the Ministry to assist the "Spiritual Leader" fulfill his/her responsibilities and may represent the Ministry's interests along with the "Spiritual Leader." Other officers may be appointed to fulfill specific duties as designated by the Spiritual Leader (e.g. "Financial Secretary")

- 4.2 Only active members of UBC are eligible to serve as either "Spiritual Leader/authorized representative" of an official Ministry.

- 4.3 All Officers of the Church, leaders of committees, and official ministries are considered Spiritual Leaders

Section 5 Church Staff

- 5.1 The church shall employ paid and non-paid staff as it has need.
- 5.2 All paid staff positions salaries shall be approved by the Joint Board and voted by the church.
- 5.3 Job descriptions shall be established for both paid and non-paid staff positions.

Article 5 Church Services and Meetings

Section 1 Worship Services:

The church shall meet each Sunday and other designated times for the worship of God, for preaching, instruction, prayer, and evangelism. . These services will be open to *all people and shall be conducted under the direction of the pastor or designated church officer in the absence of the pastor.

Section 2 Business Meetings:

- 2.1 Regular Business Meeting** - Regular business meetings shall be held semi-annually in June and December to make the church aware of its progress. The meetings will be held in the church facility or a reasonably accessible location. A one month written notice or announcement shall be given. The agenda shall be distributed to the church at least one week prior to the business meeting.
- 2.2 Special Business Meeting** – Special meetings can be formally called by the Pastor or Joint Board in order to address special issues that may arise. Any church member desiring to call a special meeting must consult the Joint Board.
- 2.3 Quorum** - Once proper notification has been given and a place and time has been established, those in attendance will be considered a quorum.
- 2.4 Voting** – Each active member age sixteen or older shall have one (1) vote.
- 2.5 Chair** - The Moderator preside over the Church Business Meetings.

*With the rare exceptions in accordance with the Church Discipline Policy and Code of Conduct Policy.

Article 6 Licensing and Ordination

Licensing and Ordination

The Church may grant a license to preach to any person who gives evidence that they have been called of God to preach the gospel. A candidate will enter into a period of ministerial training followed by the preaching of an initial sermon before the congregation. Upon the approval of the church the candidates will be licensed to exercise their gifts.

The Church may ordain a person as a Minister of the Gospel who gives satisfactory evidence of his or her call to vocational Christian ministry and of scriptural qualifications for ordination. The Church shall for this purpose, call an Ordaining Council, which shall examine the qualifications of the candidate and bring recommendations to the Church concerning the ordination. The Ordination service will take place once the Council determines the candidate is fit/ready to serve. A vote of the membership present will occur during the ordination service to officially confirm the candidates for ordination.

Upon ordination, the licensed minister can perform funerals, baptisms, weddings, and Holy Communion.

Article 7 Church Year

The fiscal year shall be the calendar year (January – December).

Article 8 Amendments

These Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present at a regular business meeting of the Church. Proposed amendments shall be presented to the Joint Board in writing, at least one month prior to voting. Printed copies will be made available at the worship services on the Sunday preceding such a vote.

Article 9 Reviewing the By-Laws

The Pastor and Joint Board shall yearly present to the church the opportunity to review the by-laws in order to include new recommendations, amendments.