

## **WEEK 10: CHURCH AGREEMENTS AND REVISION**

### **DAY 1: STATEMENT OF FAITH**

1. As soon as a group of baptized believers become a local church they should make some agreements. These are made to help the members relate to each other. These agreements list the responsibilities to each other and to the whole church. They help to prevent problems and to serve as a guide in solving problems.

Why should a local church make some agreements? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Agreements help the members relate to each other. They help to prevent problems and to serve as a guide in solving problems.

A statement of faith should be made by the local church. The purpose for this is to give a summary of what the church believes. Many people become Baptists who were members of other denominations. They sometimes bring some of the teachings from their previous denomination into the church. Maybe those teachings are not based on what is taught in the New Testament. If the church has a clear statement of belief, or faith, a person who becomes a member will know the beliefs of the church.

Why should a statement of faith be made? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. A statement of faith gives a summary of what the church believes so that a person who becomes a member will know the beliefs of the church.

The statement of faith can be very short or can have long explanations. It needs to have Scripture verses given to show why each item is a belief.

Following is a sample of a statement of faith. Study it and discuss it in class. Discuss the statement of faith of your church. If your church does not have a statement of faith, discuss how one can be written.

# STATEMENT OF FAITH

## BAPTIST CHURCH

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1. We believe the Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God's revelation of Himself to man. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Matthew 5:17-18; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20-21.

2. We believe there is only one living and true God. The eternal God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes and the same nature, essence, or being.

A. God the Father. He is all powerful, all loving and all wise. Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 23:9 and 28:19; Mark 1:9-11.

B. God the Son. Christ is the eternal Son of God. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Doing God's will, He allowed himself to be killed and buried. He then arose from the grave, having victory over sin, and is now exalted at the right hand of the Father as our Mediator. He dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord. Matthew 1:18-23; Romans 8:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8; Philippians 2:5-11.

C. God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. He convicts of sin, of righteousness and of judgement. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service. John 4:24; 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 2:38; Romans 8:14-16.

3. We believe man was created by the special act of God, to have fellowship with God. Man disobeyed God and fellowship was broken. This is sin, separation from God. Man sinned against God by his own free choice. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. Genesis 1:26-30; 3:1-24; Romans 3:10-18, 23; 6:6; Ephesians 2:1-22.

4. We believe salvation involves the sinner responding in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. The believer is set apart to God's purposes. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit is dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life. Salvation is completed when we are with Him in heaven. John 1:11-14; 3:3-21; Romans 8:1-18; 10:9-10; Galatians 2:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 1 John 1:6 to 2:11.

5. We believe God's grace is a glorious display of God's sovereign goodness in that He gave us eternal life, a salvation of which we do not deserve. All true believers endure to the end. Believers may fall into sin but they do not fall away from the state of grace. They shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. John 1:12-14; 3:16; 10:27-29; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10.

6. We believe the church is a local body of baptized believers, associated by covenant, seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Its Scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. Acts 2:41-42; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 3:1-15.

7. We believe 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 which shows the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience for church members. It is a memorial to remember Christ's death, burial and resurrection until He comes again. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are church ordinances. Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29.

**WEEK 10: CHURCH AGREEMENTS AND REVISION**  
**DAY 2: CHURCH COVENANT**

1. Church membership is a covenant or agreement relationship with other believers who make up the local body of Christ. A church covenant is a written agreement between members that establishes their responsibilities to one another. It is an agreement to help church members know their responsibilities to one another.

How can a church covenant help church members? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. A church covenant helps church members know their responsibilities to one another.

Having a covenant is following God's example. God established covenants with His people. In the Old Testament God told His people to read His covenant. He told His people to teach it to their children. God's new covenant with us is the New Testament. We need to read His covenant over and over to learn it. We need to teach it to our children. We do this in order to know God's agreement with us.

Does God want us to know and understand His agreement with us? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Yes, God wants us to know, understand, and remember His agreement. Jesus told us to remember His new agreement, or covenant, every time we have the Lord's Supper. Read Luke 22:20.

It does not help to have a church covenant if church members do not know what it says. It must be read and taught well in some way. Many Baptist churches read their covenant together each time they have the Lord's Supper. Others read it together every Sunday as a part of the worship service. The covenant is sometimes printed and put inside the cover of the Bibles or song books used by the church.

Here is a sample church covenant. Study it and discuss it together in class. Does your church have a church covenant? Each local church should write its own church covenant or vote to adopt one already written such as in this sample. If your church does not have a church covenant, discuss in class how one should be written.

# OUR CHURCH COVENANT

## BAPTIST CHURCH

We believe that we have been led by the Spirit of God, to receive Jesus Christ as our Lord. After our profession of faith, we have been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Now in the presence of God and each other, we make a covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

### **For the Progress of This Church**

With the help of the Holy Spirit, we will walk together in Christian love. We will work for the progress of this church. We will support its success and spirituality. We will keep its worship, ordinances, discipline and teachings. We will do all things decently and in order.

### **As Christian Stewards**

We will give regularly and happily of our time and resources to support the ministry. We will pay the expenses of the church. We will be just when seeing ones in need. We will support missions to share the gospel through all nations.

### **Alone and at Home**

We will spend time in Bible study and prayer each day, as a family and personally. We will teach our children the ways of God. We will seek to lead our family and friends to accept Jesus as Lord.

### **Before the World**

We will walk carefully before others. We will be just in our affairs, faithful in our promises and a good example in our actions. We will avoid all gossip, telling bad things about others and being very angry. We will depend upon our Lord Jesus for happiness not upon drinking beers and liquor, using drugs, or having things of this world. We will work hard in every way we can to help the kingdom of God to grow.

### **With Each Other**

We will help each other in brotherly love. We will remember each other in prayer. We will help each other in sickness and problems. We will show our love for each other in words and actions. We will be slow to feel hurt by others and always ready to make things right and forgive.

### **When We Move**

If we move from this place, we will join another church soon, where we will be guided by God's Word. We will continue to live in covenant with God and his people in that place.

## **WEEK 10: CHURCH AGREEMENTS AND REVISION**

### **DAY 3: CHURCH CONSTITUTION**

1. A church constitution, with bylaws, is the written agreement to state the purpose and basic beliefs of the church, and to guide the church in business matters.

What does a church constitution state? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. A church constitution states the purpose and basic beliefs of the church and gives a guide in business matters.

The Bible tells us that the church should do all in a "fitting and orderly way" (1 Corinthians 14:40). A church should give serious thought as to how it does its business. A constitution can be very helpful in some legal matters that might arise.

What are two reasons for having a church constitution?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. First, having a church constitution helps the church follow the Bible instructions to do all in a fitting and orderly way. Second, a constitution can be helpful in legal matters.

A church constitution usually contains a basic statement of purpose and objective, the legal name of the church, a basic statement of doctrinal belief, and a statement of basic relationships. The constitution and/or the bylaws say how a church is organized to conduct its work and business, and give duties of church officers.

A local Baptist church should be able to write a constitution and bylaws to follow, after studying this book. Here is a sample constitution. Does your church have a constitution? Discuss this in class. If your church does not have a constitution, discuss how one can be written.

# CONSTITUTION OF \_\_\_\_\_ BAPTIST CHURCH

## **DEFINITION OF A BAPTIST CHURCH:**

A Baptist church is an autonomous (self-governing) body of people who have believed on Jesus Christ as Saviour and are born again. They have been baptized by immersion into the fellowship of His death, burial, and resurrection. They have voluntarily organized themselves into a local Christian church that follows the teachings of the Bible. This body meets regularly for worship, fellowship, and service to God.

(See Romans 6:1-7; Hebrews 10:19-25)

**Article I: NAME:** The name of this church is \_\_\_\_\_  
Baptist Church.

**Article II: OUR PURPOSE:** The purpose of this church is to proclaim the Gospel, to teach and train disciples, and to promote evangelistic missions at home and around the world, to do ministry which will further the Kingdom of God. (See Matthew 28:19, 20)

**Article III: MEMBERSHIP:** A person may become a member of this church by a majority vote of the members, after being presented to the church in one of the following ways:

1. By profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, followed by baptism by immersion as taught in the New Testament. Our church is responsible to train and teach the people whom we baptize.  
(See Acts 2:41, 17; Matthew 28:19)

2. If a member of another Baptist church asks to join our church, we will write a letter to their church. In the letter, we will ask the church leaders to tell us about the person's salvation, baptism, church membership, and Christian character. When we receive their answer, we will decide about his membership in our church. If we accept him as a new member, we will add him to our members list, and ask the other church to remove the person from their church roll.

3. If a person is not able to receive a letter from a Baptist church of which he is a member, he may come by statement that he has been baptized by immersion after having been saved. This person must be examined closely by the leadership of the church concerning his conversion (salvation) experience, his baptism, his Bible beliefs, and his present Christian life.

**Article IV: ORDINANCES:** The ordinances of the church shall be Believer Baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper. These shall be observed when candidates are ready for baptism and on a schedule as fixed by the church. (See Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29)

**Article V: CHURCH LEADERS:** Elected leaders of our church include:

1. **Ordained Leaders:** The ordained (specially set apart or recognized) leaders of our church are the pastor and the deacons. The character and duties of these men are given in 1 Timothy 3:1-13, 4:11-16, 5:17-22; Ephesians 4:11-13; Acts 6:1-6; 2 Timothy 2:15, 16, 4:2 and Titus 1:6-9. The Bible gives the responsibility to our church to prayerfully choose and set apart these men for service. Our church will ordain (set apart) these men for service by laying hands on them and having a special time of prayer for them in a worship service. They are ordained for life, but might not serve this church for life. Our church may revoke the ordination of any of our deacons or the pastor for acts of immorality or turning away from the teachings of Scripture.

**a. The Pastor.** The members of the church who are in good standing (active) shall vote to ask a man to be the pastor for an indefinite period of service. The pastor is to preach God's message to the church, teach and train the members in Christian living, and oversee the activities of the church in order to build up the Body of Christ. The Bible tells us to pray for him, follow him, and share with him. See Hebrews 13:7, 17-18; 1 Timothy 5:17-20; Galatians 6:6, 10; 2 Timothy 2:24-26)

If, after much prayer, the church believes God is leading them to remove the pastor, the church may vote to do so. At least 75% of the faithful members of the church must vote to remove him in order for the church to dismiss him. The pastor may resign from the position at any time he feels led by God to do so.

**b. The Deacons:** Our church will also have deacons to be helpers. These men must have demonstrated good Christian character, as spoken of in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-6, and they must be willing to be God's servants to the church. The members of the church who are in good standing will elect the deacons. The church will decide what specific responsibilities the deacons have. Each deacon will serve for two years, and then may have one year of rest from these responsibilities before serving again.

As with the pastor, if the church believes a deacon should be removed from office, after much prayer at least 75% of the faithful members of the church must vote for the removal.

**2. Other Elected Leaders:** Our church will choose other leaders as we need them to assist in the ministry of the church. These include the Recording Secretary, Treasurer (see 2 Corinthians 8:18-22), Sunday School Director, and Sunday School and Bible Study Teachers. (See James 3:1; Matthew 18:1-6; 2 Timothy 2:15; Matthew 28:20)

All church leaders except for the pastor and the deacons will serve for one-year terms. They may serve more than one term if the church chooses to re-elect them.

**Article VI: RELATIONSHIPS:** For the purpose of fellowship and strengthening effectiveness, this church will be a voluntary member of the Baptist Union of \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ Association. We will contribute to the support--prayerfully, financially, and with our several abilities--of the spread of the Gospel through these organizations.

**Article VII: BUSINESS MEETINGS:** The church will have regular Business Meetings once every three months, or more often if needed. The pastor or one of the deacons will lead the meeting. Each member of the church who is in good standing has one vote in all matters presented to the church in a business meeting.

**Article VIII: AMENDMENTS:** The church may amend (change or add to) this Constitution in the following way:

1. The proposed amendment will be announced in two consecutive Sunday worship services.
2. Then, the church will have a business meeting. If two-thirds of the members present vote for the amendment, it will be recorded as part of the Constitution.

**WEEK 10: CHURCH AGREEMENTS AND REVISION**  
**DAY 4: CHURCH AGREEMENTS**

1. Write three kinds of agreements a local Baptist church should have.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_
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2. A local Baptist church should have (1) a statement of faith, (2) a church covenant, and (3) a church constitution.

Why should a church have a statement of faith? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. A statement of faith gives a summary of what the church believes so that a person who is a member will know the beliefs of the church.

Why should a church have a church covenant? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. A church covenant is a written agreement between members that establishes their responsibilities to one another. It is an agreement to help church members know their responsibilities to one another.

Why should a church have a church constitution? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. A church constitution states the purpose and basic beliefs of the church and gives a guide in business matters.

Use the rest of your study time today to go back over the three sample church agreements given. Look for anything you have questions about. Write those questions here so that you can ask them in class.

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Can you think of other items that your church constitution has in it that are not in the sample one given? Are there items in the sample constitution given that are not in your church constitution? Plan to discuss how such items could be added to your church constitution, if the church members agree that they would be good.

Make plans, now, to do something about it if your church does not have these three agreements.

## **WEEK 10: CHURCH AGREEMENTS AND REVISION**

### **DAY 5: REVISION**

You have come to the final day's work in the course. We hope you have studied your lessons well and that you know the answers to all the questions. At the end of Week 5 we revised the first half of the course. Today we will revise the last five lessons. Do the best you can to answer all of the questions without looking back in the book. If you have trouble with any question, study the lesson again where it was taught.

#### **Questions from Week 6:**

1. Write the names of the three forms of church government found in the history of the Church.

(1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Which one of the three forms of church government have Baptists chosen to use?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What should each church member do at a church business meeting?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. After a church committee works out detailed plans, what does the committee do?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Who decides how many officers a local Baptist church should have?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Questions from Week 7:**

1. What three things should a pastor do and be to his flock, the church?

(1) \_\_\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Why do Baptists call their church leader "pastor"? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Why don't Baptists call their church leaders priests? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Who selects the pastor for a local church? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What are we doing when we ordain a pastor or deacon? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. How does marking a list of Sunday School class members help the teacher?

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5. What legal documents should be carefully kept by the church? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Questions from Week 9:**

1. How does a church become a member of the Baptist union/convention and a local association in your country?

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2. What makes up the Baptist denomination in your country? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Draw a picture that shows the correct relationship between churches in a Baptist association or union/convention.

4. Why is it good to cooperate with other Christian denominations in some community programmes?

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5. What does it mean when we say "separation of church and government"?

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**Questions from Week 10:**

1. Write three kinds of agreements a local Baptist church should have.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Why should a church have a statement of faith? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Why should a church have a church covenant? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Why should a church have a church constitution? \_\_\_\_\_

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Who are the Baptists? What do Baptists believe? Why do Baptists do the things they do? How do Baptists worship? These are questions we often hear. This book was written to give you answers to these questions. It is written as clearly as possible, with Bible verses for you to read, so that you may understand Baptists when you have completed the last page.

This text is designed to be used by the theological students in Africa. It follows the pattern of the TEXT-Africa series which is also printed by Evangel Publishing House of Nairobi, Kenya. Baptist Basics is not under the editorial scheme of the TEXT-Africa series. Rather it is written and produced by the Baptist Churches and is designed to be used as an auxiliary text by theological students and church members.