

# **Constitution**

## **of the North American Baptist Conference**

### **1. Name**

1.1 This organization shall be known as the North American Baptist Conference (hereinafter the Conference).

### **2. Mission and Values**

2.1 The mission of the Conference is to glorify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ at home and internationally. This Mission will be accomplished:

2.1.1 by stimulating Associations and churches to make disciples;

2.1.2 by facilitating the interdependence of member churches;

2.1.3 by providing services and advancing ministries that are best done collectively.

2.2 There are seven core values that guide the Conference's mission to make disciples for Jesus Christ.

2.2.1 We value the authority and inspiration of God's Word (II Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12, II Peter 1:21).

2.2.2 We value making new disciples (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47).

2.2.3 We value building servant leaders (Matthew 9:37-38; II Timothy 2:2).

2.2.4 We value deepening our God-centeredness (Matthew 6:33; Colossians 2:9-10).

2.2.5 We value working together (I Corinthians 3:9; Philippians 1:5).

2.2.6 We value developing Biblical stewards (Mark 12:41-44; II Corinthians 8:2-15).

2.2.7 We value showing compassionate care (I Corinthians 12:25-26; Galatians 6:2; Philippians 2:1-2).

### **3. Membership**

3.1 The constituency of the Conference shall be the member churches belonging to North American Baptist Conference Associations in Canada and the United States.

3.2 An Association is officially recognized by the Conference as an organization of Baptist churches in a specific geographic area. Associations are free to make formal partnerships (i.e. Regions, etc.) with each other that enable them to work together for the accomplishment of their purpose and vision.

3.2.1 Criteria for recognition as an Association are:

3.2.1.1 Agreement with the Conference Statement of Beliefs (Listed in the Appendix); 3.2.1.2 Agreement with the Conference Constitution;

3.2.1.3 Agreement with the Conference Mission, Values and Purposes (Listed in the Appendix);

3.2.1.4 Formed as a duly legally organized entity or an officially recognized organization;

3.2.1.5 Approved as recommended by the Governing Board at a Triennial Conference business session;

### 3.2.2 Responsibilities and Expectations

3.2.2.1 Each Association will establish policies and practices that are in agreement with the Conference Statement of Beliefs and the Conference Mission, Values and Purposes.

3.2.2.2 Each Association will support and promote the Conference's Mission, Values and Purposes and be a part of a strategy to fulfill them.

3.2.2.3 Each Association will, on its own, (or together with another Association), appoint a Regional Minister who will assist them with their ministry purposes.

## 4. Conference Leadership

All persons appointed or elected into leadership positions of the Conference shall be members in good standing of a member church of the Conference. They shall perform their duties consistent with the Conference Statement of Beliefs and the Conference Mission, Values, and Purposes.

### 4.1 Executive Director

The Executive Director shall:

4.1.1 serve as the chief executive officer for the Conference and lead the Conference in the development and oversight of programs, activities, personnel, budget, operational policies, procedures, and strategies necessary to achieve the Conference Mission, Values and Purposes, within limitations placed by the Governing Board;

4.1.2 be an ex officio member, with right to vote, on the boards of all Cooperating Organizations of the Conference.

### 4.2 Officers

The officers of the Conference shall be the Moderator, the Vice Moderator, and the Treasurer. Employees of the Conference International Office or of a Cooperating Organization shall not be eligible to serve as an officer of the Conference.

#### 4.2.1 Moderator

The Moderator shall be the Corporate President and shall:

4.2.1.1 chair the meetings of the Triennial Conference business session and the Governing Board;

4.2.1.2 ensure that the Conference complies with this Constitution;

4.2.1.3 be the voice of the Governing Board to the Executive Director.

#### 4.2.2 Vice Moderator

The Vice Moderator shall be the Corporate Secretary and shall:

4.2.2.1 serve in the absence or inability of the Moderator.

#### 4.2.3 Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be the Corporate Treasurer and shall:

4.2.3.1 serve as an advisor and resource person in Conference financial matters;

4.2.3.2 submit a financial report to the Governing Board annually and to the delegates at Triennial Conferences business sessions.

#### 4.3 Governing Board

The Governing Board shall consist of the Conference officers, the past moderator and seven members-at-large, including two Regional Ministers. The Governing Board shall include members from Canada and the United States. It shall include men and women. Employees of the Conference International Office or of a Cooperating Organization shall not be eligible to serve on the Governing Board. The Executive Director shall participate as a non-voting member of the Governing Board. The Governing Board shall:

4.3.1 serve as the governing body of the Conference, subject only to the decisions of delegates of the Triennial Conference business session. The Governing Board shall have full authority to act between Triennial Conference business sessions, except that it shall not have authority to amend this Constitution, or to act contrary to the provisions of this Constitution;

4.3.2 hold the Executive Director accountable to ensure that the Conference Mission, Values and Purposes are being carried out.

4.3.3 Without restricting the general authority of the foregoing, the Governing Board shall have authority:

4.3.3.1 to serve as the Resolutions Committee for the Triennial Conference;

4.3.3.2 to set policies for the Executive Director and for the effective functioning of the Governing Board;

4.3.3.3 to form subsidiary corporations as may be necessary for the holding of property or administering the assets and funds of the Conference;

4.3.3.4 to appoint the Conference Constitutional Change Committee, the Conference Nominating Committee, and the Executive Director Search Committee;

4.3.3.5 to appoint persons to fill vacancies for the Officers or the Executive Director between meetings of the Triennial Conference.

4.3.4 The Moderator shall have authority to call meetings of the Governing Board.

4.3.5 The Governing Board shall meet each calendar year at such times as may be deemed necessary. Meetings may be held via electronic means provided all participating can communicate with each other. At least one meeting annually shall be face to face in person.

4.3.6 The quorum for the meetings of the Governing Board shall be sixty-six percent (66%) of the voting members.

## **5. Triennial Conference**

- 5.1 The members of the Conference shall be called to assemble every three years.
- 5.2 The purpose of the Triennial Conference shall be:
  - 5.2.1 to motivate the members to fulfill the Conference Mission, Values and Purposes;
  - 5.2.2 to cultivate a sense of unity among members and the member churches;
  - 5.2.3 to conduct a business session for the purpose of elections and any other necessary business.
- 5.3 Resolutions and Statement of Beliefs
  - 5.3.1 Any member church or delegate to the Triennial Conference may submit, in writing, a proposed resolution or a change to the Statement of Beliefs.
  - 5.3.2 Any proposed resolution-including a resolution to change the Statement of Beliefs made by a member church or delegate, shall be referred to the Governing Board without vote or discussion at the Triennial Conference business session. The Governing Board may present the proposed resolutions or proposed changes to the Statement of Beliefs to the delegates at the next Triennial Conference business session.
  - 5.3.3 If a proposed resolution on any matter, including a change to the Statement of Beliefs, is not submitted to the delegates at the next Triennial Conference business session by the Governing Board, it may be submitted directly to the delegates of the Triennial Conference business session by the church or delegate and considered, provided it receives a two-thirds vote approving consideration prior to discussion on the resolution.
- 5.4 All delegates must be members of a member church of the Conference or an Association approved church plant of the Conference and shall be in attendance at the Triennial Conference business session to exercise their vote. Voting by proxy shall not be permitted. The delegates include:
  - 5.4.1 representatives of the member churches and church plants. Each church or Association approved church plant shall be entitled to send as delegates its senior/Lead pastor or alternate, members of the pastoral staff approved by the church and one lay person for every fifty members of the church or fraction thereof;
  - 5.4.2 members of the Governing Board;
  - 5.4.3 President or Executive Director of Cooperating Organizations;
  - 5.4.4 missionaries appointed by the Conference;
  - 5.4.5 retired pastors and missionaries of the Conference;
  - 5.4.6 members of the Executive Team of the Conference International Office;
  - 5.4.7 Regional Ministers.
- 5.5 A quorum for the business sessions of the Triennial Conference shall be fifty percent (50%) of registered delegates.
- 5.6 The Moderator shall appoint committees necessary for facilitation of the Triennial Conference business session (subject to approval of the delegates).

## 5.7 Elections

The Governing Board shall appoint a Nominating Committee to develop a list of nominees for the Conference Officers and members-at-large of the Governing Board. The Governing Board shall receive the report of the Nominating Committee and present (one or more nominations of) candidates to the Triennial Conference business session.

### 5.7.1 Officers

The Moderator, Vice Moderator and Treasurer shall be elected for three-year terms. The Moderator may not be re-elected for a second consecutive term. The Vice Moderator and Treasurer may be re-elected for a maximum of three consecutive terms.

### 5.7.2 Members-at-Large

Members-at-large of the Governing Board shall be elected for three year terms. They may be re-elected for a maximum of three consecutive terms.

### 5.7.3 Executive Director

When required, the Governing Board shall appoint a Search Committee for the candidate for the Executive Director position.

5.7.3.1 In case of a vacancy in the Executive Director position, the candidate for Executive Director shall be elected by two-thirds vote of the delegates at a Triennial Conference business session.

5.7.3.2 If the Executive Director was appointed by the Governing Board due to a vacancy between Triennial Conferences, the Executive Director shall be affirmed to the position at the next Triennial Conference business session by two-thirds vote of the delegates.

5.7.3.3 The Executive Director can be terminated by two-thirds vote of the Governing Board or by two-thirds vote of delegates at a Triennial Conference business session.

5.7.3.4 There shall be no time limit on the term of office.

## 6. Cooperating Organization

A Cooperating Organization is an organization that provides an area of service to the Conference, churches and their members to help them better achieve the Conference Mission, Values and Purposes.

6.1 Criteria for recognition as a Cooperating Organization are:

- 6.1.1 Agreement with the Conference Statement of Beliefs (Listed in appendix);
- 6.1.2 Agreement with the Conference Constitution;
- 6.1.3 Agreement with the Conference Mission, Values and Purposes (Listed in appendix);
- 6.1.4 Provide a service to the Conference, churches and their members;
- 6.1.5 Formed as a duly legally organized entity or an officially recognized organization;
- 6.1.6 Approved by the Conference Governing Board.

## 6.2 Responsibilities and Expectations

- 6.2.1 Cooperating Organizations shall establish policies and practices that are in harmony with the Conference Statement of Beliefs, Mission, Values and Purposes.
- 6.2.2 Cooperating Organizations shall provide a service to the Conference and its members and participate in developing strategies to achieve Conference Purposes.
- 6.2.3 The Conference Executive Director or designee shall be an ex-officio member of the organization's governing board with right to vote.
- 6.2.4 Directors of Cooperating Organizations shall, upon recommendation of the Cooperating Organization, be appointed by the Conference Governing Board. At least two-thirds of the Cooperating Organizations governing board membership shall be members of a member church of the Conference, including the Chairman and President or Executive Director.
- 6.2.5 The Conference Governing Board shall approve the Cooperating Organization's Constitution and revisions. Each Cooperating Organization shall have this approval requirement included in each of their respective Constitutions and By-laws.

6.3 Cooperating Organizations shall be listed in the Appendix.

## 7. Amendments

This Constitution may only be amended by a two-thirds vote of delegates at a business session of the Triennial Conference. Proposed amendments shall be submitted to the Constitutional Change Committee. The Constitutional Change Committee shall forward the amendments, together with its own recommendations thereupon, to the Governing Board. The Governing Board shall submit, in writing, the proposed recommendations, together with its own recommendations to the delegates at the next Triennial Conference business session.

## 8. Effective Date

This Constitution shall supersede any previously existing Constitution of the Conference and shall become effective immediately upon adoption by the delegates at the Triennial Conference business session.

## 9. Procedural Authority and Decorum

Procedural issues in dispute shall be determined by reference to Robert's Rules of Order. The Spirit of Christ, as expressed in the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), shall be observed in all discussions at the Triennial Conference business session and the Governing Board.

Adopted by Delegates to the Triennial  
July 26, 2018

## **APPENDIX**

### **1. Statement of Beliefs**

#### **Preface**

Baptists, since their beginnings, repeatedly have composed confessions, which expressed the doctrinal consensus among related churches. In principle, however, Baptists always have insisted that no statement of faith can be considered creedally binding even upon concurring congregations. The purpose of their doctrinal summaries was to explain to other Christians and to the larger society what Baptists believed and practiced. Within and among Baptist churches, statements of faith also provided a standard for instruction, counsel and fellowship. We, as the North American Baptist Conference, presently feel the need to state more fully our Baptist understanding of the Christian faith. The purpose that guided us in writing and the use that we intend for this declaration are to:

1. further the sense of identity and the spirit of unity within our North American Baptist Conference by declaring our common doctrinal understanding;
2. provide a basis for doctrinal instruction within our conference;
3. provide a basis for doctrinal discussions in the hiring of conference personnel;
4. serve as a reference point when opinions differ;
5. provide a basis for doctrinal discussion in admitting new churches and new pastors into our various associations;
6. provide a doctrinal guide for new churches;
7. give a doctrinal witness beyond our conference.

In continuity with our immediate forefathers and the larger fellowship of Baptists throughout history, we seek to practice and propagate by God's grace the following convictions:

- **We believe the Bible is God's Word given by divine inspiration, the record of God's revelation of Himself to humanity**  
(2 Timothy 3:16). It is trustworthy, sufficient, without error—the supreme authority and guide for all doctrine and conduct (1 Peter 1:23-25; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). It is the truth by which God brings people into a saving relationship with Himself and leads them to Christian maturity (John 20:31, 1 John 5:9-12; Matthew 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2).
- **We believe in the one living and true God, perfect in wisdom, sovereignty, holiness, justice, mercy, and love**  
(1 Timothy 1:17; Psalm 86:15; Deuteronomy 32:3-4). He exists eternally in three coequal persons who act together in creation, providence and redemption (Genesis 1:26; 1 Peter 1:2; Hebrews 1:1-3).
  - **The Father** reigns with providential care over all life and history in the created universe. He hears and answers prayer (1 Chronicles 29:11-13; Matthew 7:11). He initiated salvation by sending His Son, and He is Father to those who by faith accept His Son as Lord and Savior (1 John 4:9-10; John 3:16; John 1:12; Acts 16:31).
  - **The Son** became man, Jesus Christ, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary (John 1:14; Matthew 1:18). Being fully God and fully man, He revealed God through His sinless life, miracles, and teaching (John 14:9; Hebrews 4:15; Matthew 4:23-24). He provided salvation through His atoning death in our place and by His bodily resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 2 Corinthians 5:21;

Romans 4:23-25). He ascended into heaven where He rules over all creation (Philippians 2:5-11). He intercedes for all believers and dwells in them as their ever-present Lord (Romans 8:34; John 14:23).

o **The Holy Spirit** inspired men to write the Scriptures (2 Peter 1:21). Through this Word, He convicts individuals of their sinfulness and of the righteousness of Christ, draws them to the Savior, and bears witness to their new birth (James 1:18; John 16:7-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6; Romans 8:16). At regeneration and conversion, the believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Spirit indwells, seals, and gives spiritual gifts to all believers for ministry in the church and society (Romans 8:9-11; Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 12:5-8; 1 Peter 4:10). He empowers, guides, teaches, fills, sanctifies, and produces the fruit of Christlikeness in all who yield to Him (Acts 4:31; Romans 8:14; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13; Ephesians 5:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Galatians 5:16, 22-23).

- **We believe God created an order of spiritual beings called angels to serve Him and do His will**  
(Psalm 148:1-5; Colossians 1:16). The holy angels are obedient spirits ministering to the heirs of salvation and glorifying God (Hebrews 1:6-7, 13-14). Certain angels, called demons, Satan being their chief, through deliberate choice revolted and fell from their exalted position (Revelation 12:7-9). They now tempt individuals to rebel against God (1 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 5:8). Their destiny in hell has been sealed by Christ's victory over sin and death (Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 20:10).
- **We believe God created man in His own image to have fellowship with Himself and to be steward over His creation**  
(Genesis 1:26-28). As a result, each person is unique, possesses dignity, and is worthy of respect (Psalm 139:13-17). Through the temptation of Satan, Adam chose to disobey God; this brought sin and death to the human race and suffering to all creation (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12-21, 8-22). Therefore, everyone is born with a sinful nature and needs to be reconciled to God (Romans 3:9-18, 23). Satan tempts people to rebel against God, even those who love Him (Ephesians 4:27; 2 Corinthians 2:11; Matthew 16:23). Nonetheless, everyone is personally responsible to God for thoughts, actions, and beliefs and has the right to approach Him directly through Jesus Christ, the only mediator (Romans 14:12; 1 Timothy 2:5).
- **We believe salvation is redemption by Christ of the whole person from sin and death**  
(2 Timothy 1:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 5:23). It is offered as a free gift by God to all and must be received personally through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:4; Ephesians 2:8-9; Acts 20:21). An individual is united to Christ by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:27). As a child of God, the believer is acquitted of all guilt and brought into a new relationship of peace (Romans 5:1). Christians grow as the Holy Spirit enables them to understand and obey the Word of God (2 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 4:15; 1 Thessalonians 3:12).
- **We believe the Church is the body of which Christ is the head and all who believe in Him are members**  
(Ephesians 1:22-23; Romans 12:4-5). Christians are commanded to be baptized upon profession of faith and to unite with a local church for mutual encouragement and growth in discipleship through worship, nurture, service, and the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world (Acts 2:41-42, 47; Luke 24:45-48). Each church is a self-governing body under the lordship of Christ with all members sharing responsibility (Acts

13:1-3; 14:26-28). The form of government is understood to be congregational (Matthew 18:17; Acts 6:3-6; 15:22-23).

- The ordinances of the church are baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20). It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of the Savior Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3-5). The Lord's Supper is the partaking of the bread and of the cup by believers together as a continuing memorial of the broken body and shed blood of Christ. It is an act of thankful dedication to Him and serves to unite His people until He returns (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
- To express unity in Christ, local churches form associations and a conference for mutual counsel, fellowship, and a more effective fulfillment of Christ's commission (Acts 15; 1 Corinthians 6:1-3).
- **We believe religious liberty, rooted in Scripture, is the inalienable right of all individuals to freedom of conscience with ultimate accountability to God** (Genesis 1:27; John 8:32; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Romans 8:21; Acts 5:29). Church and state exist by the will of God. Each has distinctive concerns and responsibilities, free from control by the other (Matthew 22:21). Christians should pray for civil leaders, and obey and support government in matters not contrary to Scripture (1 Timothy 2:1-4; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-16). The state should guarantee religious liberty to all persons and groups regardless of their religious preferences, consistent with the common good.
- **We believe Christians, individually and collectively, are salt and light in society** (Matthew 5:13-16). In a Christlike spirit, they oppose greed, selfishness and vice; they promote truth, justice and peace; they aid the needy and preserve the dignity of people of all races and conditions (Hebrews 13:5; Luke 9:23; Titus 2:12; Philippians 4:8-9; 1 John 3:16-17; James 2:1-4).
  - We affirm the family as the basic unit of society and seek to preserve its integrity and stability (Genesis 2:21-25; Ephesians 6:1-4).
  - We believe the Bible teaches that marriage refers to the covenant relationship exclusively between one man and one woman, as instituted by God in the beginning (Genesis 2:20b-24; 1 Corinthians 7:2; Hebrews 13:4).
- **We believe God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring all things to their appropriate end and establish the new heaven and the new earth** (Ephesians 1:9-10, Revelation 21:1). The certain hope of the Christian is that Jesus Christ will return to the earth suddenly, personally, and visibly in glory according to His promise (Titus 2:13; Revelation 1:7; 3:11; John 14:1-3). The dead will be raised, and Christ will judge mankind in righteousness (John 5:28-29). The unrighteous will be consigned to the everlasting punishment prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41, 46; Revelation 20:10). The righteous, in their resurrected and glorified bodies, will receive their reward and dwell forever with the Lord (Philippians 3:20-21; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

*Adopted by the North American Baptist Conference delegates, August 10-15, 1982, Niagara Falls, NY. Section 8 amended by the delegates, July 15-19, 2009, Winnipeg, MB.*

## **2. The Conference Purposes**

Because the North American Baptist Conference of Churches exists, member churches will be able to make disciples more effectively and broadly than one church or smaller group of churches could do alone.

- Member churches will be trained for missional ministries.
- Member churches will be connected with cross-cultural ministries.
- North American Baptist Missionaries will be sent and supported by member churches.
- Member churches and mission field nationals will be equipped to develop spiritual leaders.

## **3. Cooperating Organizations**

The Cooperating Organizations are:

- Sioux Falls Seminary
- Taylor College and Seminary
- Church Extension Investors Fund, Limited
- Church Extension Investors Fund, Inc.