



Berachah Church

*400 Ashbourne Road Cheltenham, PA 19012
215-379-8700*

CONSTITUTION AND COVENANT

Revised by Congregational Vote on August 2021

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF BERACHAH CHURCH

PREAMBLE

Desiring to have a simple form of worship along lines of New Testament teaching and early church practice, and believing that the evangelization of the world is the privilege and duty of the Church of God, a sacred trust committed to us by our ascended Lord, and that we can best carry out His will by working along non-sectarian lines, we form ourselves into an evangelical church organization, without regard to denominational lines or methods of procedure.

ARTICLE I

NAME

The name of this organization shall be **BERACHAH CHURCH**, incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, May 13, 1912. **BERACHAH** is a Hebrew word meaning "blessing" as found in 2 Chronicles 20:26.

ARTICLE II

PURPOSE

The mission of this organization is:

Know God, Love One Another, & Go Make Disciples

Supporting scriptures:

II Timothy: 3:16 ¹⁶ *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*

Matthew 28:19-20 "Therefore go and make disciples..."

Romans 14:9 "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may **edify** another."

Ephesians 4:12 "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the **edifying** of the body of Christ:"

John 13:35 "By this shall all men **know** that you are my disciples, if you have **love** one to another."

ARTICLE III

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

Section 1. This Doctrinal Statement is not intended to summarize all the truth of Scripture; rather, it is intended to specify basic truths that we uphold as a church body.

A. SCRIPTURE

We believe that the Scripture of the Old and New Testament are inerrant and verbally inspired in the original manuscripts by the living God, were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that they are God's complete and final word of truth and are the supreme, final and only infallible authority for doctrine, faith and conduct. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 2 Peter 1 :21

B. THE GODHEAD

We believe in one God, eternally coexistent of three persons in one essence as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; that each person of the Godhead is separate and distinct with the same attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence and is perfect in holiness and righteousness. Genesis 1:26, Deuteronomy 6:4, John 1:18

C. JESUS CHRIST

- a. HIS PERSON. We believe in the absolute, essential Deity of Christ, the Son of God, that Jesus as the Son of man was begotten by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, that He is true God and true man, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was and is the only sinless human being and the only One who could be the Savior of mankind.

Hebrews 1:8, Luke 1:35, 1 Timothy 2:5, John 1:4, Matthew 1:21

- b. HIS WORK. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ made one final and complete sacrifice for the sins of the world, that in His body on the cross He was man's representative and substitutionary sacrifice for sin, and through His death and shed blood is God's only means of redemption from sin. Colossians 1:20-22, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 9:22

We believe in the literal bodily resurrection of the crucified body of Jesus Christ, His physical bodily ascension into heaven where, since His ascension, He sits as head of all things to the church, and, through the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man. Timothy 2:5, 1 Corinthians 15:14-17, Romans 1:4, Ephesians 4:7-10

D. HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Godhead who convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. At conversion, He regenerates, indwells, seals and baptizes the believer into the Body of Christ. Subsequently, by the Scriptures, He conforms the believer increasingly to the image of Christ and empowers him for spiritual service. 1 Corinthians 12:13, John 16:8-11, Romans 8:9, Ephesians 1: 13, 2 Corinthians 3: 18, Acts 1:8, John 15:26, 2 Corinthians 2:10-12

E. MAN

We believe that man was created by God in God's own image, as recorded in Genesis, that Adam sinned entirely of His own volition and responsibility, that

Adam as the progenitor of the entire human race transmitted sin and death on and into the whole humanity, and all are born sinners with a corrupt and sinful nature and are spiritually dead. Genesis 1:6, Romans 3:23, Romans 3:9, Romans 5:12, Psalm 51:5

F. MARRIAGE

We believe that the institution of marriage was created by God and defined as the unity between one man and one woman before God in holy covenant. This unity establishes the biblical foundation for the family and serves as the example of how Jesus Christ is united with the church. Genesis 1:27-28, Genesis 2:21-25, Isaiah 54:5, Malachi 2:14, Ephesians 5:23,24,32

G. SALVATION

We believe that, because of the universal result of sin, all responsible human beings are dead in trespasses and sins, are lost, condemned, and this position and condition is changed only for those who trust Christ as Savior and are thus saved from sin and death. We believe that salvation from sin and eternal condemnation is only by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ by His death and resurrection, that all those born of water and of the Spirit have eternal life and are eternally secure, that salvation is not to be works but that good works and holy living are the results of salvation.

H. CHURCH

We believe that the Church of Jesus Christ is both visible and invisible. Invisibly, it is the Body of Christ, of which Christ is the Head and of which every regenerated person is a member. Visibly, it is a local assembly of redeemed persons. We believe that the Church is distinct from Israel.

We believe that the corporate church on earth is God's witness and testimony to proclaim the Gospel to the entire world, that the Lord's Supper (communion) and baptism by immersion in water are divine institutions given by the Word of God to be maintained in this age. Matthew 28:18-20, 1 Corinthians 11:25-26, Acts 2:41, Acts 8:36-38

I. SATAN

We believe that Satan is a personal, powerful and reigning dignitary, that he is the prince of power of all evil, the spirit that works in the hearts and minds of all the unsaved, and is the adversary of God and the saved, and shall be cast into the Lake of Fire eternally. 1 Peter 5:8 Ephesians 2:2 Revelation 20:10

J. THE FUTURE

We believe that Jesus Christ will make a bodily return to usher in New Creation and God's design for eternity will be carried out.

2 Timothy 4:1, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, Daniel 9:25-27. Revelation 20:12-15 Luke 16:24

ARTICLE IV

MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. QUALIFICATIONS:

Members shall consist of those who have received the Lord Jesus as their personal Savior, have been baptized by immersion as an expression of faith and obedience to His commandment, have subscribed to our doctrinal basis and upon completing New Member's Training have been approved by the Board of Elders.

Individuals who transfer their membership from other churches by a letter of recommendation are to proclaim the Lordship of Jesus Christ, affirm that they were baptized by immersion and complete the New Member's training whereby they will be approved by the Board of Elders.

Water baptism may be waived for candidates who may, due to physical or medical reasons, not be able to submit to immersion. They shall, however, affirm to the Senior Pastor their salvation and belief in the doctrine and baptism by immersion.

Section 2. RESPONSIBILITIES:

Members shall be expected to attend services, support the ministry of Berachah Church with their talents and financial gifts. 1 Corinthians 16:2

Section 3. DISCIPLINE:

According to Biblical principles as interpreted by the Board of Elders. The following conditions shall be considered grounds for church discipline:

- a. Refusal to reaffirm the Doctrinal Statement of the Church.
- b. Continuation in flagrant sin. Galatians 5:19-21 1 Corinthians 6:9,10 (New KJV)
- c. Failure to be in submission to the Pastor(s) and the Board of Elders
- d. Failure to attempt reconciliation with another believer when a difference exists. Matthew 5:23, 24 Matthew 18:15-17

Section 4. TERMINATION:

The following conditions shall be considered grounds for termination of church membership

- a. Failure to comply with disciplinary measures in a six (6) month period shall normally be considered grounds for termination of membership. However, a careful inquiry shall be made into each case, and the accused member shall have an opportunity to a fair hearing.
- b. Joining another church shall be considered an automatic forfeiture of membership.
- c. Failure to communicate with or respond to communications from this church for a period of one (1) year.

Section 5. VOTING:

Each member, 18 years of age or older, shall have voting privileges in all official meetings of the church. Members can join the church at age 14 but are not authorized the privilege of voting on official matters until the full legal age of 18.

ARTICLE V

THE ELDER BOARD OF THE CHURCH

Section 1. COMPOSITION

The Official Board of the church shall be known as the Elder Board. The Elder Board shall consist of all ordained Pastors called and employed by the church and 8 to 12 elected men to serve as Elders. The Elder Board will have the Senior Pastor serve as Moderator of the Board, and elders will elect an executive council consisting of a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary.

Section 2. TERM OF OFFICE

An individual may hold only one (1) office on the Elder Board as defined in Article V, Section 1. Elected officers shall serve a three (3) year term beginning January 1 of the year following their election at the Semi-Annual Meeting held in October. After completion of a full term of office, no Elder shall be eligible for re-election until a full year has elapsed.

Section 3. QUALIFICATIONS

- a. Senior Pastor must be a born-again man of exemplary Christian character evidenced with the gifts of preaching and leading. He must be a graduate of a recognized theological program. He must also be ordained, have experience, and be in harmony with the church's doctrinal standards. The Senior Pastor shall be a member of the Elder Board and serve as the "Moderator of the Board" and the "Chief of Staff" over all employees of the church. 2 Timothy 1:9 1 Timothy 4: 12 I Peter 5
- b. Pastor(s) must be a born-again man of exemplary Christian character. He must also be a graduate of an evangelical training school and be in harmony with the doctrinal standards of this church. The Pastor(s) must be ordained, be able to communicate God's Word clearly, and denote a call to the position they are called to serve. 2 Timothy 1:9 1 Timothy 4: 12 I Peter 5

c. Elders shall give evidence of having been born-again mature men of exemplary Christian character who demonstrate active church membership as demonstrated by participation, support, tithing and spiritual gifts. Each officer shall give evidence of maturity and commitment to serve the Lord, loyalty to the church and its program through faithful attendance at the Lord's Day services, prayer meetings and special services as fully as possible. Officers shall be men whose way of life reflects the qualifications laid down 1 Timothy 3: 1-13 and who adhere to the principles set forth in this constitution.

Section 4. NOMINATIONS AND ELECTION

a. The nominations for the offices of Elder shall be made by a Nominating Committee of seven (7) persons who shall be appointed by the Elder Board at a meeting in April preferable but not later than a June meeting. This Nominating Committee shall be composed of two (2) members of the Elder Board together with five (5) members of the congregation. The Senior Pastor shall serve in an advisory capacity to the committee.

b. This committee shall endeavor to select at least one (1), but preferably two (2) nominees for each vacancy. The Nominating Committee shall submit all nominations to the Elder Board for approval. The names shall then be posted and publicly declared to the congregation at least three (3) weeks prior to the Congregational Meeting.

c. The time of election shall be at the Semi-Annual Business Meeting of the Congregation in October. The manner of the election shall be by vote of the members of congregation present.

Section 5. ELECTION AND TERMINATION OF THE PASTOR AND/OR ASSISTANT PASTOR(S)

a. The Pastor and/or Assistant Pastor(s) of this church shall first be recommended to the congregation by at least two-thirds (2/3) ballot vote of the members of the entire Elder Board. The election may take place at one of the Semi-Annual Congregational Meetings, or at a special meeting called by the Elder Board, notice having been given by public notice and at the public services of the congregation two (2) weeks in advance of the time for election. The Pastor and/or Assistant Pastor(s) shall be elected by at least two-thirds (2/3) majority ballot vote of the eligible voters present.

b. The termination of a Pastor and/or Assistant Pastor(s) may be had at any time under the following conditions:

1) Resignation -If a Pastor resigns, he shall give a minimum of (30) days notice.

2) Dismissal – If at any time the Pastor fails to adhere to the requirements of this Constitution, or his personal belief, preaching, teaching, or behavior conflicts with the doctrinal basis of Berachah herein stated, this shall be grounds for dismissal. A vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the members present at a duly constituted congregational meeting shall be sufficient to dismiss a pastor. In the event of a Pastor being terminated, his salary shall be continued thirty (30) days. 1 Timothy 5:19

Section 6. REPLACEMENT OF BOARD MEMBERS

In the case of death, resignation or suspension of an Elder the Board shall continue to function without replacement until a congregational vote elects a replacement at the next Semi-Annual Business Meeting of the Congregation. In the rare even of a multiple loss of board members at the same time, the board reserves the right to call for a special congregational meeting to elect replacements to the Elder Board.

Section 7. BOARD LEADERSHIP AND GENERAL RESPONSIBILITY

- a. The Senior Pastor by virtue of his office shall serve as the Board Moderator, responsible for the organization, planning and ensuring all board & congregational meetings function in adherence to Robert Rules of Order.
- b. The Elder Board shall elect a Chairman, who shall be responsible for mustering the elders to put forth their fullest effort in the support and function of their office, ensuring quorum for each meeting and collaborating with Moderator in the execution of all board meetings. The Elder Board shall also elect a Vice-Chairman to assist the Chairman and assume his duties during his absence. The Elder Board shall also elect a Treasurer to oversee the budget and a Secretary to properly record all official functions of the board and church. This group of leaders shall make up the Board Executive Council. The Executive Council possesses no special authority except that it identifies the collaborative effort of these leaders.

Section 8. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. PASTOR(S) The duty of the Senior Pastor shall be to look after the spiritual welfare of the members of the church, minister in the Word, to provide leadership and vision. The other pastors called to serve on staff shall be designated a specific support role and shall serve to support the Senior Pastor in his vision and leadership. The Pastor(s) will have full voice and vote with the other members of the Elder Board.
- b. ELDERS. The Elders are the overseers of the church who protect the flock (Acts 20:17, 28-31), Feeds the flock (1 Timothy 5:17, 18), Leads the flock (1 Peter 5:1,2) and share in leadership of the flock with the pastors. Each Elder shall have a full vote on the Elder Board, serve for three (3) years and agree to commit the time and resources to effectively serve on the board by attending meetings and exercising leadership within the congregation.

The Elders shall act in behalf of the church in the purchase, holding or disposing of any real estate or fixed property. They shall not, however, purchase or dispose of real estate or fixed property, or incur financial obligations over \$10,000 in any one (1) item within a three hundred and sixty (360) day period except by express authority conveyed through a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote by ballot of the full members present and voting at a constitutionally called Congregation Meeting. This being done, they shall have full power to act in behalf of the church. The Chairman or in his absence the Vice Chairman, or an appointed Elder are empowered to affix the official seal to all agreements, deeds or other business papers.

c. The Elder Board shall have the authority to commission “committees” to oversee certain functions on behalf of the Elder Board. Committees shall not have approving authority to make decisions on behalf of the Elder Board but shall be commissioned to study, review or oversee actions or functions approved by the Elder Board.

d. DEACONS/DEACONESS. The Elder Board shall exercise the right to ordain men and women to the positions of Deacons or Deaconess. Such Deacons/Deaconess shall serve by appointment of the board to oversee functional ministry areas within the life of the church to meet the needs of the church. The Elder Board, determinant upon need and function, shall appoint deacons. Deacons are not an elected position, or play a governance role and shall not exercise any rights within the Elder Board but shall be empowered to lead and oversee ministry areas and thus shall be accountable to the Board of Elders.

e. CHURCH TREASURER The Church Treasurer shall be bonded and properly insured at church expense for amounts to be determined by the Elder Board. He shall accurately keep the financial records of the church, excluding those records pertaining to the missionary program of the church, and bank or invest all monies pertaining to his responsibility in the church, as designated by the Elder Board. He shall properly distribute all funds not related to the missionary program of the church in accordance with the decisions of the Elder Board. He shall render his account monthly to the Board and annually at the Congregational Meeting, submit his books at any time for auditing, and turn over to his successor, when elected, all monies, books, papers, and other records belonging to the church.

g. SECRETARY The secretary shall serve as secretary of the Elder Board and as Church Clerk, shall keep accurate minutes of all official meetings and all business transactions, shall keep an accurate record of church membership, shall have in custody the church seal and such papers and other records promptly to his successor.

Section 9. BOARD MEETING PROCEDURES

a. LEADERSHIP. Elder Board meetings shall be organized, led and managed by the Senior Pastor who serves as the Moderator. The Elders shall elect an Executive Council consisting of a Chairman, Vice-chairman, Treasurer, and Secretary, by a simple majority of those present at the first meeting of each calendar year. Pastors on staff shall not be elected to any of these positions.

b. FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS The Elder Board shall meet not less than six times a year with the first such meeting to be held no later than four (4) weeks following the Bi-annual Congregational Meeting.

c. TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING The Elder Board at their first meeting after the annual election shall decide for themselves as to the time and place for their meetings.

d. COMMITTEES At the first meeting of the new Board, all standing committees shall be newly appointed by the Chairman, subject to the approval of the Board.

e. QUORUM. The quorum for any Elder Board meeting shall be 2/3 the size of the elected board members and pastors, (i.e.) 8 elders + 2 pastors = 7 quorum, 9 elders + 2 pastors = 8 quorum, etc. All

decisions made by board require a two-thirds concurrence of present quorum. All members shall have been given sufficient notice of meeting.

f. FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS. Any expenditures of money not covered under Article V, Section 8-c shall be the responsibility of the Elder Board, likewise, any obligation exceeding \$10,000 (on any one (1) item within a 360-day period) shall be by congregation approval.

g. VOTING. The deciding factor in any vote taken in the Elder Board meeting shall be a two-third (2/3) majority vote of the members present. Abstaining from a vote will not be interpreted as a contrary vote. Abstaining is encouraged where a potential conflict of interest or other situation where a member chooses not to vote on the issue. A full concurrence by all the other members shall be recorded as a unanimous vote.

ARTICLE VI

CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

Section 1. MEETINGS

Congregational meetings shall be held semi-annually and as required to meet special considerations. All meetings, both semi-annual and special shall be announced at the services and written notice placed in the church bulletin at least two full weeks prior to the scheduled date.

a. SEMI-ANNUAL MEETINGS The semi-annual meetings of Berachah Church shall be determined by the Elder Board and held on a Sunday in the months of March and October. These meetings are open to all business transactions not elsewhere limited (e.g., election of Board members). Requests to place an item on the agenda may be made to any member of the Elder Board, verbally or in writing prior to the meeting of the Elder Board in February or September.

b. SPECIAL MEETINGS A special Congregational Business Meeting may be called by the Elder Board at any time. A special meeting will also be held if requested in writing and signed by twenty-five percent (25%) of the church membership on roll at that time. Special meetings are for transaction of business published on the agenda only. Discussion on other matters is permitted, but may not be voted upon. In unusual circumstances, written explanation will be sent to all members at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

Section 2. QUORUM

The voting members present at any congregational meeting, called in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution of Bylaws of this church, shall be considered a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section 3. VOTING

All matters brought before the congregation, except as otherwise specifically provided for in this Constitution, shall be decided by a majority vote of the membership present and voting,

the method of voting to be determined by the Chairman. Use of a ballot shall be mandatory upon the request of any one (1) voting member of the congregation.

Section 4. RULES OF ORDER

All Congregational Business Meetings, unless otherwise specified by our Constitution and Bylaws, shall be conducted according to Roberts Revised Rules of Order and in Christian love.

ARTICLE VII

FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year of the Berachah Church shall be January 1 to December 31 of the same year.

ARTICLE VII

AMENDMENTS

The Constitution may be amended or revised by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote by ballot of the members present and voting at any Congregational Business Meeting, provided that a copy of such proposed amendments or revisions be posted in a prominent place in church at least two (2) weeks prior to the meeting and notice given in all official communications from Berachah Church.

ARTICLE IX

DISSOLUTION

No part of the net earnings of this corporation shall ever inure to the benefit of any donor, member, director or officer of this corporation, or any private individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any of the corporation assets.

Upon dissolution, any and all assets of this corporation must be distributed to a non-profit organization as determined annually by the Elder Board at their first meeting following the Annual Congregational Meeting.

CHURCH COVENANT

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

We, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, will walk together in Christian love; will strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness and comfort; will promote its prosperity and spirituality; will sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

We also will maintain family and private devotions; will educate our children spiritually; will seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; will walk circumspectly in the world; will be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our conduct; will avoid all tattling, back-biting, and excessive anger; will be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further will watch over one another in brotherly love; will remember one another in prayer; will aid one another in sickness and distress; will cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and will always be ready for reconciliation and, mindful of the rules of our Savior, will secure it without delay.

When we remove from this place, we will, as soon as possible unite with some other church where we can carry out the support of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.