

**Constitution and Bylaws
of
The General Association of General Baptists**

Preamble

Believing that we have a special ministry to perform and that God has given us a special place for that ministry, we the people called General Baptists do therefore define our mission and describe our organization and its guidelines for ministry by a constitution and bylaws.

Constitution

Article I Name

The name of this organization shall be “The General Association of General Baptists.”

Article II Membership

This organization shall be composed of local General Baptist associations and churches that have petitioned for membership and have been duly accepted by vote of the organization.

Article III Objectives

A. To unite into one fellowship all the local associations and churches of General Baptists.

B. To assist them through its ministries in the task of winning people to Christ at home and abroad and in developing believers to their highest potential in Christian service.

C. To promote Christian education, mission outreach, benevolent enterprises, and other objectives that this fellowship may deem necessary for sharing in building up the Kingdom of God.

Article IV Representation

General Association delegates shall be members of General Baptist churches and represent as follows:

A. Local Association Representation

The local association shall certify the following as delegates from its association:

1. All employed church personnel engaged in ministry, such as pastors, ministers of education, music, youth, etc.
2. Missionaries, chaplains, and evangelists.
3. Members of the Council of Associations, the executive and administrative personnel employed by them in full-time Christian service, leaders/directors of Institutional Ministries, and the elected officers of the General Association.
4. The moderator and clerk of the association for the coming year.

5. All honorably retired pastors and church personnel of General Baptist churches who have been engaged in the ministry.

B. Local Church Representation

Local churches shall select delegates to the General Association—two delegates for each 50 members or fraction thereof.

Article V Officers –Their Election and Duties

A. The officers of this organization shall be a moderator, moderator-elect, vice moderator, clerk, and assistant clerk.

B. The moderator shall preside at the annual meeting of the General Association, shall be chairperson of the Program Committee for the annual meeting, and shall be an ex officio member of the Council of Associations.

C. The clerk shall record the proceedings of the General Association meeting, suitable for printing within 90 days following the meeting. In the event the clerk is unable or unwilling to fulfill his/her assignment, the assistant clerk shall assume full responsibility. Otherwise, the assistant shall function at the discretion of the clerk. Neither the clerk nor assistant shall be eligible for reelection to this respective office after having served five consecutive years. Other duties are set forth in Article II of the bylaws.

D. The vice moderator, clerk, and assistant clerk shall be nominated from the floor and elected at each annual session.

E. The moderator-elect shall become moderator at the conclusion of the annual session with the vice moderator assuming the role of moderator-elect.

F. In the event the moderator is unable or unwilling to fulfill the designated assignment, the moderator-elect will fill the vacated position. Therefore, it will be necessary to elect a moderator-elect and vice moderator at the next annual meeting of the General Association. In the event that neither the moderator nor vice moderator is available to serve as moderator of the next annual meeting, the chairperson of the Council of Associations shall become the moderator for that session and a moderator-elect and vice moderator will be elected.

G. All officers shall perform their ordinary duties and shall serve until their successors are elected and qualified.

Article VI Executive Officers and Ministry Directors

The General Association through the Council of Associations may employ such executive officers and ministry directors as shall be required. These employees shall perform such duties as may be assigned to them by the Council of Associations.

Article VII Local Association and Church Reports

Statistical and financial reports from local associations and churches affiliated with the General Association shall be made on forms approved by the Executive Council. These forms shall be reviewed and approved by the Executive Council at least every five years. The clerk of the General Association may make suggestions for revision to the Executive Council.

Article VIII Authority

While being a self-determining body in its own sphere, the General Association shall have no jurisdiction in the internal affairs of local associations and churches. It may, however, serve in an advisory capacity on matters of doctrine or polity. If at any time the General Association finds itself to have been sufficiently aggrieved, it reserves the right to withdraw fellowship from any member body.

The General Association of General Baptists authorizes the Council of Associations to serve as the parent corporation of the denomination with vested powers of a deliberative body. The powers shall be defined by and always be subordinate to the body known as the General Association of General Baptists.

Article IX Meetings

The General Association shall convene annually.

Article X Councils, Ministries, Boards, Commissions, and Committees

A. The General Association has the right to assign to the Council of Associations, ministries, boards, commissions, and committees of its own creation such programs and objectives that do not by their nature specifically need to be performed by these organizations.

B. In the creation of a new council, ministry, commission, or standing committee, the membership shall be divided as nearly as possible into three groups. One group shall be elected or appointed to serve for three years, one group for two years, and one group for one year. Thereafter, members shall be elected to serve a term of three years.

C. The councils and corporate directors of ministries of the General Association shall consist of no less than 9 members nor more than 24 members unless otherwise stated in the constitution of the Council of Associations. Honorary membership may also be granted by a board to individuals in recognition of their faithful service.

D. A majority of the members of each subsidiary corporation shall constitute a quorum.

E. No person shall have membership on more than one subsidiary corporation.

F. There shall be a Council of Associations as provided for in the bylaws of the General Association of General Baptists.

G. The Council of Associations and each subsidiary corporation shall be authorized to prepare its own constitution and/or bylaws in accordance with this constitution and bylaws. These documents shall be approved by the General Association.

Article XI Church Membership Requirement

Officers of the General Association, members of the corporations, and all missionaries of this organization shall be members of General Baptist churches.

At least two-thirds of the trustees of all denominational colleges and universities shall be members of General Baptist churches.

Article XII Distribution of Assets in Event of Dissolution

In the event that the Council of Associations be dissolved or for any reason cease to

function, whether it be by the expressed will of the General Association of General Baptists or by operation of law, the assets of the Council of Associations shall be conveyed to and become the property of such legal successors as established by the General Association of General Baptists and in compliance with Section 501(C)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law).

Article XIII Amendments and Alterations

Any article in the constitution may be altered or amended, or articles may be added to the constitution, by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the delegates present and voting, provided that the proposed amendments or additions shall have been presented at the last regular meeting, approved by the majority vote of this body, and incorporated in the published proceedings of that session.

Bylaws

Article I Meetings

A. In the event that the host church or association withdraws its invitation, the Executive Council and the General Association officers may change the time and/or place of the meeting.

B. In case of a state of war or any other national emergency, the associational officers and the Executive Council may cancel any meeting by a three-fourths majority of members present. If the annual meeting of the General Association be canceled under said conditions, the tenure of elected officials shall be extended for the same length of time as the regular meeting of the General Association is postponed. Therefore, only one group shall be elected in any one year.

C. No appeals for money shall be made and no offerings shall be taken at the meetings of the General Association, except such as have been approved by the Council of Associations. If any resolution or motion involving the expenditure of money is offered upon the floor, it shall be referred to the Executive Council for study. After adequate study, the Executive Council shall make a recommendation to the same sitting of the General Association when feasible.

D. Each delegate and member of a General Baptist church attending the annual meeting of the General Association shall pay a registration fee, which shall be determined by the Council of Associations. No fee shall be required of non-General Baptist visitors at the annual session.

Article II Enrollment of Delegates and Quorum

A. The clerk and assistant clerk of the General Association shall be at the place of meeting one day before each annual session convenes to enroll delegates and members who present proper credentials from their respective churches and associations. Any questions about seating delegates shall be referred to a committee on credentials, which shall report its findings and make recommendations to the General Association.

B. Representatives from 10 associations and 25 churches with a minimum of 100 delegates shall constitute a quorum.

Article III Parliamentary Authority

The **Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised** shall be the manual of parliamentary practice for the guidance of the General Association in all matters of procedure not set forth in its bylaws.

Article IV The Council of Associations

The Council of Associations shall be the legal parent corporation of the General Association of General Baptists.

The Council of Associations shall provide overall leadership and supervision in planning, implementing, coordinating, and evaluating the various ministries of the General Association of General Baptists.

The Council of Associations shall have vested powers of a deliberative body. Its powers shall be defined by and always subordinate to the body known as the General Association of General Baptists whose delegates to the annual meeting shall be members of the corporation.

A. The standards for membership to the Council of Associations are as follow:

1. Each local association of two or more churches reporting to the General Association of General Baptists shall elect for a three-calendar-year term its own representatives to serve on the Council of Associations. (See Council of Associations constitution Article III, A.)

2. Each association may elect one representative per each 1,000 members or fraction thereof.

3. Membership on the Council of Associations will not transfer from one association to another.

4. The local association will be responsible for the expenses (travel, food, lodging) of its representatives to the meetings of the Council of Associations.

5. The local association shall exercise discretion in the election of its representatives in situations that could be construed as conflict of interest or nepotism (i.e., employees of denominational auxiliaries or entities, close relatives, etc.).

6. The local association shall elect first and second alternates and empower them to vote in the absence of the representative. The alternates' representation will be limited to the Council of Associations and will not include service on boards and committees.

7. The Council of Associations shall adopt guidelines to assist the local associations in selecting their representative(s) to the Council of Associations. Such guidelines are subject to the approval of the General Association of General Baptists.

B. The Council of Associations is authorized as the parent corporation to organize itself and elect officers, a 24-member Executive Council, and the necessary committees to establish and oversee the various ministries of the General Association of General Baptists. This will be done through the constitution and bylaws of the Council of Associations and is subject to approval of the General Association of General Baptists.

C. The ministries shall have two classifications: Basic and Institutional Ministries. The council shall through its constitution direct and oversee the ministries of both classifications and shall report annually to the General Association. Each ministry shall be an integral part of the total ministry and shall have guidelines and/or a constitution and

bylaws that define specific functions.

All such guidelines and constitution and bylaws shall be approved by the General Association of General Baptists.

1. **Basic Ministries** may be International Missions, National Missions, Congregational Ministries, Pastoral Ministries, Administrative/ Financial Services, and the Support Services of the Men In Missions Board and Women's Ministries. Some of these may need to be incorporated for legal and functional purposes, but these corporations shall be limited to specific areas of function and shall be accountable to the Leadership Team in all areas of planning, budgeting, and implementing programs.

2. **Institutional Ministries** shall be those General Baptist institutions that function to aid, assist, and support Basic Ministries in their efforts to build up God's Kingdom through the Church. A regular memo of understand shall define the specific ways each institution performs these functions.

Each Institutional Ministry may be incorporated, and shall remain accountable to the General Association of General Baptists through its Council of Associations. These might include but not be limited to institutions of higher education, health care ministries, adoption and family service ministries, financial service agencies, and publishing/printing houses.

a. Institutional Ministry boards may function as subsidiary corporations to the parent corporation.

b. Board members serving the Institutional Ministries elected at the annual meeting of the General Association shall be responsible to and report to the General Association through the Executive Council of the Council of Associations and remain in a communication relationship with the executive director as detailed in the memo of understanding.

c. Articles of incorporation and constitutions and bylaws, including all future amendments and changes, shall be disclosed to the General Association of General Baptists and shall be approved by the Council of Associations prior to ratifying the memorandum of understanding. The delegates to the annual meeting of the General Association of General Baptists shall review these memoranda as part of the annual report of the Council of Associations.

d. Corporate officers and directors shall be nominated by the respective ministries in compliance with denominational policy.

e. The Institutional Ministry corporate directors will select and employ their directors, president, and health care administrators.

f. Directors, presidents, and administrators of the Institutional Ministries will function as a part of the Leadership Team at the invitation of the executive director.

D. The General Association shall give the Council of Associations direction regarding mission objectives, hear comprehensive evaluation of each ministry, and approve budgets.

E. The General Association shall elect the executive director of the denomination. The process for nomination of the executive director and the appointment of the ministry directors is to be established in the constitution and bylaws of the Council of Associations and approved by the General Association of General Baptists.

Article V Committees and Commissions

The General Association shall reserve the right to appoint or elect the members of various committees and commissions who shall then perform necessary services on behalf of the General Association. Each committee or commission shall be created in accordance with Article X Sections A and B of the constitution.

A. Standing Committees. The standing committees of the General Association shall include a Nominating Committee and a Resolutions Committee. These committees shall meet prior to the adjournment of each annual session for the purpose of electing a chairperson and vice chairperson and shall provide a written report to the GA Clerk and to the moderator-elect.

1. Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee shall consist of six members. Two members shall be appointed each year by the moderator at the General Association. The committee shall make nominations for membership on standing committees and commissions.

2. Resolutions Committee. The Resolutions Committee shall consist of six members. The committee shall receive and study resolutions, making recommendations concerning the same at each annual session.

3. General Association Program Committee. A Program Committee shall consist of the moderator and vice moderator of the General Association, clerk of the General Association, Leadership Team, chairperson of the Council of Associations, and the chairperson of the Executive Council. This committee will plan the entire program for the General Association meeting, including schedule, guest speakers, and other participants. A tentative program will be submitted to the Council of Associations at its first regular meeting of the year.

B. Commissions. General associational commissions shall include Church Polity and Doctrine Commission, Social Issues Commission, and a Chaplain's Commission.

1. Church Polity and Doctrine Commission. The Church Polity and Doctrine Commission shall consist of six members. The commission shall make extensive and continuous studies of practices in General Baptist churches relative to polity and doctrine. The commission shall report annually its findings to the General Association.

2. Social Issues Commission. The Social Issues Commission shall consist of 6 members. They shall study the contemporary issues of society that directly bear upon Christian values and faith and report annually to the General Association.

3. Chaplain's Commission. The Chaplain's Commission shall consist of six members. It shall work closely with the office of Pastoral Ministries in endorsing General Baptist candidates for the chaplaincy.

C. Annual Committees. The annual committees of the General Association shall include a Credentials, Petitions and Requests, and Finance and Minutes. Each committee shall consist of six members appointed annually by the moderator.

1. The Credentials Committee shall determine if there is a proper quorum present to conduct the business of the Association (Article II of bylaws). The committee shall facilitate the examination and presentation of any new applicants for membership in the Association. The committee shall rule on any questions concerning the seating of

delegates at the General Association annual meeting (Article IV of constitution). The committee, on the basis of doctrinal soundness and cooperative spirit, shall facilitate the examination and presentation of any applicant for membership in the Association.

2. The Petitions and Requests Committee shall consider and make recommendation concerning any petition or request submitted to the General Association.

3. The Finance and Minutes Committee duties shall include making recommendations concerning the number of copies of minutes printed, the amount of local association dues per member to the General Association, and the amount of honorarium to be given to the clerk and assistant clerk of the General Association.

Article VI The General Baptist Historical Society

The General Baptist Historical Society shall consist of those persons interested in the history of the General Baptist denomination. The Historical Society shall elect its officers annually and an executive committee shall be determined by the society. The society shall actively pursue the location and preservation of items or documents of historical importance. The society shall encourage research and writing in the area of General Baptist history.

Article VII The General Baptist Foundation

A. The General Baptist Foundation shall be administered by a subsidiary corporation consisting of five persons elected from and by the Council of Associations.

B. The General Baptist Foundation is organized for the purpose of developing, receiving, administering, and expending funds to benefit and carry out the purposes of the General Association of General Baptists, including its various boards, commissions, agencies, and institutions.

1. The foundation will receive funds and property from various constituents and friends of the General Association of General Baptists for management and investment purposes.

2. The foundation will receive gifts and bequests from members and supporters of General Baptist churches throughout the denomination.

3. The foundation shall use, retain, invest, and reinvest all such funds and other property according to the purposes of the foundation.

4. The foundation shall disburse all designated gifts according to the direction of the donor. All undesignated gifts will be for the benefit of General Baptist ministries, and participating ministries shall be determined by the Council of Associations.

Article VIII Evangelism

A. Evangelism shall be under the oversight of the Council of Associations and directed by the Leadership Team.

B. The purpose is to plan, coordinate, and promote the work of a unified program of evangelism in every facet of denominational endeavors. The following are objectives:

1. To assure that evangelism is on the agenda of every ministry, thus avoiding the practice of evangelism being reduced to the work of a single entity.

2. To provide for shared planning of major denominational evangelism emphases.

3. To provide for the coordination of evangelism efforts.

4. To allow for a unified thrust in evangelism.
5. To provide for a broader base of support and promotion in all denominational evangelism events and emphases.
6. To allow for the creation of a broader definition of evangelism in the denomination.

Article IX Adoption of Reports and Recommendations

The General Association shall reserve the right to consider, amend, or table any report or recommendation before adopting or rejecting it.

Article X Charters of Agencies

The charters of all agencies shall provide that the trustees or directors of such agencies be elected by the Association and their charters, constitutions, and bylaws be submitted and approved by the General Association.

Article XI Unified Giving

Unified Giving shall be the systematic and orderly means of receiving money from churches and individuals and disbursing this money to the agencies of the General Association.

- A. Each funded board or ministry of the General Association shall submit to the Executive Council, through the office of the executive director, an itemized report of its yearly receipts and an itemized estimate of its needs for the next fiscal year.
- B. The Council of Associations shall recommend to the General Association a budget, which shall have taken into account the needs of the ministries of the Association.
- C. The Council of Associations shall recommend the percentage of the Unified Giving receipts to be allocated.
- D. Local churches shall be encouraged to send their Unified Giving gifts on a monthly basis to the Office of Executive Director. The executive director shall disburse the funds monthly to each of the funded ministries according to the allocations approved by the General Association.

Article XII Associational Financial Year

The financial affairs of the Association shall be operated on the fiscal year beginning on January 1 and closing December 31.

Article XIII Amendments

These bylaws may be amended by two-thirds majority vote of the delegates present and voting at any sitting of the General Association.