

# **Constitution of West Bridge Church**

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## **Preamble**

We, the members of West Bridge Church of Danville, Indiana, do hereby declare and establish this Constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith and to provide for the governance and operation of the church.

## **Article I**

### **Name and Affiliation**

#### **Section 1: Name**

The name of the organization, originally chartered as First Baptist Church of Danville, Indiana, shall be West Bridge Church of Danville, Indiana. West Bridge Church maintains biblical Baptist beliefs and practices.

#### **Section 2: Purpose**

The purpose of the organization shall be the preaching and teaching of the Bible, the administration of the ordinances of the New Testament, the spiritual improvement of the members, ministry to its own community and the spreading of the Gospel through all the earth. The purpose is further expressed in Article III, Membership Commitment.

#### **Section 3: Affiliations**

The beliefs and religious practices of West Bridge Church are not subject to the control of any other civil or ecclesiastical body. However, we recognize the benefits of mutual cooperation. The church may maintain affiliation with like-minded associations. Any change of affiliation must be approved by a majority vote of the members during a business meeting.

## Article II

### Doctrinal Statement

1. We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God; written "by holy men of old as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"; that it is without any admixture of error; that it is the only complete and final revelation of God's will; and that by it alone human conduct, creeds and opinions shall be determined. 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:19-21; John 17:17; 1 Peter 1:23
2. We believe that there is only one true and living God, who is an infinitely intelligent Spirit, inexpressibly glorious in holiness, worthy of all honor and commanding our love and confidence. We further believe that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; that they are equal in every divine perfection; and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption. John 4:24; Psalm 83:18; Exodus 15:11; Revelation 4:11; Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6
3. We believe in the eternal deity of Jesus Christ; that by Him all things were made; that He was virgin born; that He added to His divine nature a human nature so that He became the unique God-man, fully divine and fully human forever; that He died an atoning death; that He arose in physical resurrection; that He ascended to God's right hand at which place He is our great High Priest; that He is coming in the air to receive His own unto Himself in resurrection and rapture; and that He is to return to earth to establish God's Kingdom among men. We believe in a rapture of the church and the imminent, visible and bodily return of Christ to reign over His Kingdom. Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:19-20; Matthew 28:6-7; Luke 24:2-9; 1 John 2:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 19:6, 11-20
4. We believe the Holy Spirit is a divine person, co-eternal and co-equal with the Father and Son; and that He convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment; that He regenerates all who believe in Christ; and that He baptizes, seals, fills, teaches and sanctifies the believer. Matthew 28:19; John 16:8-11; 3:5-6; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:13-14; John 15:26-27; Ephesians 5:18
5. We believe that Satan was once one of God's highest created beings; that through pride and ambition he fell; that he is now the malignant "prince of the power of the air" and the unholiest god of this world; that he is the implacable enemy of God and His Christ and the accuser of all believers; that he is the author of all false religions; that he is destined to final defeat at the hands of Jesus Christ; and that he shall be cast into the lake of fire and remain there forever. Ezekiel 28:14-17; Isaiah 14:12-15; Ephesians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 12:10; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-11; Revelation 20:10
6. We believe that all people are sinners both by nature and by deed and that God has provided a salvation which is wholly of grace through the substitutionary atonement of Christ on the cross; that no human merit or effort can in any way assist in procuring

forgiveness of sin; that one who believes in Christ as their Savior is justified (declared to be righteous) before God; and that all such are saved with an eternal salvation that cannot be undone. Romans 5:12; 3:23-26; Ephesians 2:8-9; Acts 13:39; John 10:28-29

7. We believe in a future of eternal bliss with Christ in a new heaven and new earth for the saved and a hell of eternal suffering separated from God for the lost. John 14:1-3; Revelation 21:3-4; 20:11-15

8. We believe that the New Testament Church is a congregation of baptized believers; that its standard of faith and practice is found in the Bible alone; that it practices baptism of the believer by immersion and remembers the Lord's death "till He comes" in the communion; that its commission is found in the great commission of Matthew 28:18-20; that the local church has the sole right of self government; and that in all matters of membership, policy, government, discipline and benevolence, the will of the local church is final. Acts 2:41-42; 1 Corinthians 11:2; Matthew 28:18-20; Colossians 1:13; Eph 5:23-24; 1 Peter 5:1-4

## **Article III** **Membership Commitment**

Having received the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized, we unite as a local body of Christ so that we may encourage one another toward love and good deeds.

From Scripture, we learn that the greatest command is to love the Lord our God with our whole heart, soul, and mind. Therefore, we seek to encourage one another to love Him by:

- Gathering weekly to worship Him together
- Studying, understanding and obeying His will as found in the Bible
- Cultivating an active prayer life
- Giving of our time, talent and treasure to advance the mission of the church
- Seeking to be controlled by the Holy Spirit rather than alcohol, drugs or anything else, practicing the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control
- Nurturing family members through spiritual training

From Scripture, we learn that the second greatest command is to love our neighbor as ourselves. We understand that “our neighbor” crosses ethnic, socio-economic, and religious barriers. Therefore, we endeavor to show God’s love to all people both within our areas of influence and around the world. While this display of love may be in the form of meeting physical needs, the ultimate goal is to meet spiritual needs by sharing the gospel of Christ.

We understand that the world will know we are Christ’s disciples by our love for each other. Therefore, we endeavor to:

- Care for one another in brotherly love
- Pray for one another
- Be slow to take offense but quick to pursue reconciliation
- Lovingly encourage, exhort and rebuke each other
- Submit to and practice church discipline as necessary for the spiritual welfare of all
- Unite with a church of like faith when we move from this place so we can continue to express our love to God and others in the context of a local church family

## **Article IV**

### **Ordinances**

#### **Section 1: Baptism**

Those professing faith in Christ shall, upon authorization of the Elder Leadership Team, be immersed in water.

#### **Section 2: The Lord's Supper**

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall generally be observed monthly. The prerequisites for participating in the Lord's Supper shall be personal salvation and those requirements set forth in 1 Corinthians 11:27-34.

## **Article V** **Membership**

### **Section 1: General**

West Bridge Church is an independent Baptist church under the lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains the exclusive right of self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this church, including who shall be members and the conditions of such membership.

### **Section 2: Candidacy**

- A. Persons desiring membership must:**
  - i. Give evidence to the Elder Leadership Team of having experienced new birth and saving faith in Jesus Christ and give a profession of their faith to the Elder Leadership Team through a membership interview conducted by members of the Elder Leadership Team.**
  - ii. Have experienced believer's baptism or be baptized as part of attaining membership.**
- B. The Elder Leadership Team may recommend candidates for membership by majority vote of the Elder Leadership Team.**
- C. Upon a recommendation of the Elder Leadership Team, the members shall vote to accept candidates into membership by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present at a regular or special business meeting.**

### **Section 3: Termination of Membership**

- A. A letter of recommendation shall be granted to any member in good standing to unite with a church of like faith by the Elder Leadership Team. The member shall be removed from the church membership roll.**
- B. A member may be removed from membership by the Elder Leadership Team upon determination that the member has joined another church.**
- C. A member may be removed from membership for disciplinary reasons per Section 4 of this article.**

## Section 4: Restoration and Discipline

- A. Members are expected to demonstrate special loyalty and concern for one another. When a member becomes knowledgeable of an offense of a magnitude to hinder spiritual growth and testimony, he is to go alone to the offending party only after self-examination and rectification, always in the spirit of humility, and with a goal of restoration. As specified in Article III, Membership Commitment, each member is to endeavor to make reconciliation quickly. 1 John 3:16; John 13:34, 35; Matthew 7:3; Matthew 18:15-18; Galatians 6:1; Matthew 5:23-25a; Ephesians 4:29-32
- B. If reconciliation is not reached, a second member, usually an elder, is to accompany the member after following the same procedure of self-examination and in a spirit of humility and restoration.
- C. If still unresolved, the Elder Leadership Team must hear the matter and attempt to bring resolution. If the matter remains unresolved, they must recommend to the church membership personal, prayerful self-examination, then prayerful effort to restore the offending member, and if still unresolved, then removal from church membership of such members who refuse to be restored. A two-thirds vote of the members present is required for removal of the offending member.
- D. No matter or offense may be heard at any step in the process unless previous biblical steps have been followed, except in the case of a public offense, such as in Galatians 2:11-15.
- E. No information concerning parties not under discussion may be heard.
- F. No member may be removed from church membership for disciplinary reasons where there is evidence of genuine fruit of repentance.
- G. When the unrepentant offending person is excluded from the membership and the Lord's table, all further relationships with that person will only be for the purpose of restoration (except for family members). The entire church body should recognize a responsibility to "say the same thing" in loving effort to restore the offending one and to maintain the church's testimony and harmony. Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:15

## **Article VI**

### **Officers, Elected Positions and Ministry Teams**

#### **Section 1: General**

All those who serve as elders, deacons or ministry leads shall be members of this church.

#### **Section 2: Officers and Scriptural Offices**

- A. The church recognizes the scriptural offices of pastor/elder and deacon.
- B. The Elder Leadership Team shall consist of all men appointed to be elders. Elders will remain on the Elder Leadership Team permanently unless they resign or are removed by the membership.
- C. The governing body of the church will be the Elder Leadership Team, which will include the lead pastor and the elders elected by the church membership to serve on the Team for a designated term. The Elder Leadership Team will act as the corporate directors of the church for legal purposes.
- D. Candidates for elder may be nominated by the Elder Leadership Team or by members of the church. Candidates for elder shall be required to meet the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and any other requirements established by the Elder Leadership Team. Candidates approved by the Elder Leadership Team and the church membership will be appointed as elders and added to the Elder Leadership Team.
- E. The Elder Leadership Team may establish various committees within the Elder Leadership Team, delegate certain powers to act on behalf of the church to various committees, and establish certain policies and procedures for the governance of the Elder Leadership Team.
- F. A team of deacons may be established at the discretion of the Elder Leadership Team. Candidates for deacon shall be required to meet the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

#### **Section 3: Elected Positions**

To assist the Elder Leadership Team in fulfilling the mission of the church, the following elected positions have been established: Clerk, Financial Secretary, Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer.

Other elected positions may be established as deemed advisable by the Elder Leadership Team in order to assist in the operations and ministries of the church in fulfilling its mission.

#### Section 4: Ministry Teams (Committees)

The Elder Leadership Team shall determine the number and types of ministry teams that are needed to fulfill the mission of the church. The ministry leads will be appointed by the pastoral staff and approved by the Elder Leadership Team.

## **Article VII**

### **Elections**

#### **Section 1: Nominating Committee**

The Elder Leadership Team shall be the nominating committee for all special and annual elections.

#### **Section 2: Majority Requirements**

- A. When any staff pastor is being elected by the church membership, two-thirds (2/3) of the votes cast shall be required for election.
- B. Two-thirds of the votes cast shall be required for the election of elders to the Elder Leadership Team and for all other positions requiring election.

#### **Section 3: General**

- A. Candidates for elected positions, other than staff pastors or paid staff, must have been members of the church for one year prior to the time of election.
- B. The Elder Leadership Team and all other elected positions shall be filled annually by election of the church membership.

## **Article VIII**

### **Termination/Resignation of Elected Positions**

#### **Section 1: Termination for Convenience and Resignation**

- A. For all terminations other than for cause, as further defined in Section 2, the Elder Leadership Team may terminate any elected pastor, elder or officer for any reason upon a two-thirds vote of the votes cast by the church membership to terminate such pastor, elder or officer. Any termination under this section 1.A. shall be effective thirty (30) days after the membership vote to terminate such pastor, elder or officer.
- B. Any pastor shall give the church thirty days' notice when resigning as pastor of the church.

#### **Section 2: Termination for Cause**

- A. Should an accusation against an elected pastor, elder or officer arise of an offense that disqualifies such person pursuant to the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 or seriously impairs the ministry of such elected pastor, elder, or officer (a "Cause Offense"), it must be handled in accordance with 1 Timothy 5:19.
- B. Should an elected pastor, elder or officer be found guilty by a majority vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the votes cast by the voting membership of a Cause Offense, such elected pastor, elder or officer may be terminated immediately.

## **Article IX**

### **Meetings of the Church**

#### **Section 1: Regular Business Meetings**

- A. Regular business meetings of the church shall be held generally on the first weekend of October, March and August. A financial report will be made available to members at each regular business meeting.
- B. The October meeting will be the annual meeting of the church. An annual report will be presented to the members at the annual meeting.
- C. The August meeting will be primarily for the purpose of electing the next year's Elder Leadership Team and other elected positions.

#### **Section 2: Special Business Meetings**

The Elder Leadership Team shall convene the church members for business when they deem it advisable to do so or when requested in writing by ten percent or more of the voting membership. Notice of such meetings shall be given at regular services of the church at least one week prior to the meeting.

#### **Section 3: Moderator**

- A. The lead pastor shall moderate business meetings.
- B. It shall be the duty of the chairman of the Elder Leadership Team to act as moderator in all meetings of the church membership when the lead pastor is absent or when matters are being discussed which represent a potential conflict of interest for the pastor.

#### **Section 4: Business Meeting Rules**

- A. Business meetings shall be conducted in an orderly fashion and in accordance with the spirit of Colossians 3:17.
- B. A quorum of one-third of the voting membership is required for the conduct of business or any vote of the membership for any purpose.
- C. The election of officers and elected positions shall be by private ballot.
- D. All other matters shall also be by private ballot when requested by three or more voting members of the church.
- E. Only church members eighteen years of age and older shall be entitled to vote.

- F. All persons who are not members of the church shall be excluded from a business meeting of the church when requested by three or more voting members of this church.
- G. A majority of votes cast shall be required for passage of all business that comes before the church except as otherwise provided herein.

## **Article X**

### **The Church's Plan of Financing**

The Lord's work at West Bridge Church will only be financed through free will offerings and borrowing money to be repaid through free will offerings. No other plan of financing will be adopted.

## **Article XI**

### **Amendments**

The constitution may be amended at any regular business meeting of the church by a vote of two-thirds of the members present, provided a month's notice has been given to the members and the change has been read in at least one business meeting and once on the Sunday before the change is voted upon. The vote is to be by secret ballot.

## **Article XII**

### **Dissolution**

The corporation shall be dissolved, and the affairs of the corporation shall be wound up upon a vote of two-thirds of the voting membership or as otherwise provided by Indiana law. Upon dissolution, assets of the corporation shall be used to satisfy pastoral and other church employees' salaries for a thirty-day period plus proportional vacation allotment. After this, assets shall be used to continue specific missionaries' support for a period of six months, or in the case of foreign missionaries, until furlough time. All other assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, to be selected by the Elder Leadership Team upon dissolution. Any such assets not disposed of shall be disposed of by the Circuit Court of Hendricks County, exclusively for such purposes or to such corporation or corporations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

Under no circumstances shall any assets be given to any individual other than those specified in this article.